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Lieutenant

MODERN FLIRTATIONS.

MODERN FLIRTATIONS;

OR,

A MONTH AT HARROWGATE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

AUTHOR OF "MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS," EIGHTH THOUSAND; "MODERN SOCIETY," SIXTH THOUSAND; "HILL AND VALLEY," THIRD THOUSAND; "SCOTLAND AND THE SCOTCH," THIRD THOUSAND; "SHETLAND AND THE SHETLANDERS," SECOND THOUSAND; "HOLIDAY HOUSE," THIRD THOUSAND; "CHARLIE SEYMOUR," THIRD THOUSAND, ETC.

"I clasped my hand close to my breast,
While my heart was as light as a feather,
Yet nothing I said, I protest,
But, —— 'Madam! 'tis very fine weather!'"

Ritson's Songs.

VOL III.

SECOND THOUSAND.

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MODERN FLIRTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

"Le temps, qui change tout, change aussi nos humeurs."

Little of what is really going on in society can be traced on its gay sparkling surface, where, amidst laughter, music, jesting, and smiles, a deep current may be flowing on of anger, envy, mortification, and disappointment. Agnes had lately allowed herself to suspect that her preference for Captain De Crespigny was by no means mutual; and though it still lingered in her mind, outliving all that coldness and caprice which had superseded the persevering ardour with which he

once endeavoured to engross her attention, the indignation of her feelings drove her now to seek relief in any counter-irritation, and especially in cultivating, beside Lord Doncaster, the society where he was most depreciated, and where she heard many a story of him from the Abbé, which filled her with angry misgivings.

Captain De Crespigny now perceived, with almost bewildered astonishment, that the beautiful Agnes remained stationary the whole evening with Lord Doncaster, wishing, he conjectured, to propitiate the uncle as a preliminary to securing the nephew, and that she actually made him a secondary object in society, while it was evident the Marquis observed and enjoyed this very visible alteration. It became particularly conspicuous at last, when Captain De Crespigny having spoken, one evening, a few words to Agnes, strolled away in momentary pique at the careless inattention of her reply, after which the vacant chair, beside her and Lord Doncaster, was immediately occupied by the Abbé, who talked down both his companions,

while a long discussion ensued, of evidently deepening interest, during which the eyes of all three were frequently directed towards Captain De Crespigny. Those of Agnes now assumed an almost unnatural brightness, and her cheek became dyed with a hectic flush of excitement. Then, for the first time, he perceived the gold crucifix which she held carelessly in her hand, while the Abbé spoke with an air of artful and subdued earnestness, and Lord Doncaster, looking like winter beside spring, watched, with evident admiration, the changes of colour and expression which flitted like an aurora borealis on her beautiful features. It occurred to Captain De Crespigny, that his uncle, believing, perhaps, in some degree, the report of his marriage to Agnes, and being an enthusiastic admirer of beauty, might wish the Abbé first to convert the young lady to his own faith, before bestowing him upon her, and as the idea flitted through his mind, he smiled inwardly to think how they would all be disappointed. Still the ceaseless conversation continued, and Captain De Crespigny, apprehending it might

never come to any particular end, resolved, for his own amusement, *coute qui coute*, to break up the *coterie*.

"Miss Dunbar!" said he, advancing, and in a matter-of-course way offering his arm, "allow me the pleasure of this quadrille with you!"

Agnes seemed almost to awaken from a dream at these words, but, after a moment's evident perplexity, during which she assumed an air of dignified indecision, Lord Doncaster having turned away to converse with Mrs O'Donoghoe, she slowly rose, and silently took her place in the dance.

Captain De Crespigny had hitherto been to Agnes like the sun to the dial, causing the lights and shadows of joy or anxiety to flit over her countenance according to his own pleasure, but now he became piqued and astonished to perceive that he could not even command her most transient attention, and with a satirical glance at her absent countenance, he emphatically exclaimed,

"A delightful party this!"

"Yes, delightful!" echoed Agnes, mechanically.

"And delightful music too!" added he, observing with increased surprise the total absence of her thoughts.

"Delightful, indeed!" repeated Agnes, in an almost dreaming tone.

"And what a delightful partner I have secured!" added Captain De Crespigny, with some asperity of tone, while gazing more and more curiously into her countenance. "I am so well pleased, that really it was fortunate I did not shoot or drown myself yesterday! We are excelling ourselves to-night, Miss Dunbar! I never saw you so agreeable! so particularly facetious! Your spirits are perfectly turbulent!"

"That is the more surprising, as I have done nothing this evening but yawn and be yawned at," replied Agnes, resuming her gay bantering tone. "I have been plastered to the wall like Warren's japan blacking, looking as grave as an old gate-post, while you were generally so far off, that I borrowed a good telescope at last, to try whether it might be possible to see you!"

"I could not approach within a mile, you

were so barricadoed with Abbés and Marquises, but you of course occupied all my thoughts. Shall I ever forget my vexation on beholding my fossil specimen of an uncle depositing his bones in the very seat I intended for myself! He is really becoming a formidable rival!"

"Very true!" replied Agnes, forcing a laugh. "Lord Doncaster is so agreeable, that I am all but captivated, and if this were leap year I might, perhaps, use the lady's privilege and propose!"

"Take care, or I shall tell him so!"

"Pray do! It will save time, and he has but little to spare!"

"I am very certain, if the old boy were ninety years younger, he would make you an offer! But certainly marriage is a juvenile indiscretion, only for young people like us!"

"Lord Doncaster says, he is any age I like, and pledges himself always to continue so!" replied Agnes, laughing, though she became agitated to the very tips of her fingers, while, trying not to seem embarrassed, she hastily drew her gloves on and off, adjusted her neck-

lace, and betrayed, by other nervous manœuvres, that her mind was not quite at ease under the observant eye of Captain De Crespigny, who looked at her with satirical surprise, and at last exclaimed, in accents of wonder, "May my bridle be too long, and my stirrup too short, Miss Dunbar, if I ever dreamed of jesting with you in earnest, about the old veteran amateur in flirtations, my uncle! That is rather beyond a joke,—and as for the Abbé, you ought to put him down in your private list of detestables, being a bad and dangerous man for young ladies to form an intimacy with. Let me be your father confessor to-night, Miss Dunbar, and tell me when, under his auspices, you mean to take the veil!"

Seeing Agnes become more and more embarrassed, Captain De Crespigny's politeness now induced him to change the subject, though still unable to conjecture any probable cause for her confusion; therefore assuming his usual tone of careless conceit, he added, "Mrs O'Donoghoe tells me there are two singularly handsome officers in the room to-night; but

I cannot see the second. We can be at no loss for No. 1. There is a strange-looking mortal opposite in black! He skips about in the quadrille like an industrious flea! Does it not seem like a frightful dream, that we are expected to find steps for such music as this? What would Monsieur D'Egville say, if he saw me, his favourite pupil, blundering through the figure to such discord?"

"He would still be proud of his scholar! I mistook you for Duvernay last night when you danced with Mrs O'Donoghoe at the Crown ball. Her dancing-master must have been St Vitus! She was as light as ——"

"As a cork flying from a bottle of champagne! You seem perplexed for once to find a simile!"

"And you are not particularly happy in yours! I have been puzzling my head for the last two seconds who that gold man is opposite in uniform. He looks like a clever caricature of an officer on leave!"

"That is Charleville of ours! Mrs O'Donoghoe considers him the first of men! almost superhuman! because, as she said to me yes-

terday, ' he is quite the thing! drives a tandem—rides races in a bonnet and habit —can back his horse down the steepest hill in Low Harrowgate—writes occasionally in the Sporting Magazine—and smokes more cigars in a day than the whole regiment in a week!' "

" There is an officer of that description in every regiment, who is generally called ' Jack' or ' Tom.' I detest these hunting, racing, smoking, and betting men; but you may introduce him to me when the quadrille is over."

" That is a ceremony I never perform, and never undergo! It is too solemn an affair for me to engage in! I never mean, as long as I live, to be introduced to any one—never!"

" Then if your present list of friends is to last for life, I hope it musters pretty strong?"

" Pardon me! We are not so particular at an ordinary as in an opera-box! There are ways and means of becoming acquainted without my making people conceited, by asking to be introduced! I tread on a lady's gown in passing, look shocked, beg her par-

don, receive the very sweetest of smiles, enter into conversation, and am intimate in a moment!"

"Very easy and convenient! I never could imagine till now why officers had all become so awkward at parties lately, in tearing my dress with their spurs!"

"Believe me, nobody is ever introduced to anybody now, and ladies have become equally ingenious with myself in picking up acquaintances. At Almacks last season, Lady Sarah Wyvell, having the good fortune to be next me in a quadrille, though we were not acquainted, asked, with a modest diffident air, if I could possibly tell her the hour. I politely took the trouble of answering her, and mentioned, that the key of my watch had been for some time mislaid, and therefore it was not wound up; but next evening, when we met at the Russian Ambassador's fête, would you believe it, she walked up to me, and, with a fascinating smile, begged my acceptance of a watch-key, beautifully set in turquoises!"

"Which fitted exactly, of course?" added

Agnes, laughing. "I like a round unvarnished tale, and admire a ready invention, especially when the story is perfectly credible, and betrays no personal conceit whatever. The world certainly grows more ridiculous every day!"

"You never said a truer thing! It is a good plan in conversation always to say what nobody can contradict! Never certainly was there a more ludicrous medley of people shuffled together, than here at this moment! Nothing but old Doncaster's whim could have brought me to such a snobbery and tag-raggery! Harrowgate is like death itself for levelling all distinctions! You may glance down the dinner-table, containing a hundred and thirty odd-looking guests, and each individual has the same quiet, little, unpretending bottle of sherry placed at his elbow, and labelled with his name. Even the great millionaire, Mr Crawford, who might, if he chose, drink liquid gold, fares no better, though he has brought home the sort of nabob fortune people used to make long ago. The art is lost now!"

"You might find it, I dare say, in some of the Useful Knowledge books."

"Yes! but I manage still better, by spending a fortune without possessing one, which does quite as well, and gives me less trouble. The hat is his who wears it, and the world is his who enjoys it."

"What a pity that very good people like the Crawfords are so often atrociously disagreeable," observed Agnes, listlessly. "We must allow, that in this world rogues are the majority; and as their good opinion is the most easily gained, and the most easily kept, I wonder less every day that some men are satisfied to secure that, and live upon it."

"I wish I had either!" said Sir Patrick, laughing.

"The whole tribe of Crawfords are, in my opinion, seriously unpleasant, with their airs of condescending stiffness and ineffable superiority," said Agnes, "never vouchsafing to appear, except at dinner, and huddling out of sight the instant we rise. Those who desire to be exclusive should take private lodgings, and not spoil a place like this by any purse-

proud finery! They almost live with Marion and the Granvilles; but I abhor that whole set!"

"So do I!" exclaimed Sir Patrick. "I hate their very parrot! He sits in a golden cage at the window, looking over his nose at one in the most exclusive manner imaginable. Old Crawford was a shop-boy in some green-grocer's once, I believe; therefore it really amused me yesterday to hear him in the loud authoritative tone of a connoisseur, finding fault with the sherry. I never pronounce upon any wine till I have drunk a few dozens of it; but it is credibly reported, that the Crawfords at home indulge in nothing but Cape Madeira and water. We, who have been brought up upon claret, conform to custom with a better grace. I should never think of putting the cellars here out of fashion, by saying what I really think of them; but *entre nous*, the whole contents are perfect poison. Of the two, I would rather drink the Harrowgate waters, because they have at least the one merit of being wholesome."

"Lord Doncaster seems to find the sherry

drinkable," said Agnes, dryly; "and, as you say, "he has cracked a good bottle or two in his time!"

"Very true! a really aristocratic man is so accustomed to everything of the best, that he tolerates or enjoys the inconveniences of an inn or a steam-boat as an amusing variety," said Mrs O'Donoghoe. "Besides which, Miss Dunbar, between you and me and the post, Lord Doncaster is old, and somewhat *passée*. You and he made quite a *tableau* together this evening; but take my word for it, Lord Doncaster is no chicken!"

"I need not take anybody's word for that! I have eyes in my head like others!" replied Agnes, rather sharply, and glancing towards a distant corner of the room where Lord Doncaster was seated, with his eye at the moment fixed on herself. "We may all see that he is not the youngest man in the world; but he certainly is one of the most agreeable!"

"Well! old or young," continued Mrs O'Donoghoe, resuming her habitual smile, "Lord Doncaster is my very particular friend, and if I meet him ten times in a day, he

shakes me by the hand as cordially the last time as the first!"

"Tiresome old bore!" replied Sir Patrick; "I would put my hand in my pocket the second time, and tell him, once a-day must do!"

"Instead of putting it into an empty pocket, Sir Patrick, offer it to one of the two Miss Crawfords," said Mrs O'Donoghoe, rolling her eyes affectedly round, like the wire-drawn eyes of a wax doll. "The old nabob is so rich, that it took five India ships to carry home his fortune, and he has settled his whole countless rupees on the young ladies. What do you say, gentlemen?—one each? That tall may-pole, the eldest, who looks as if she could eat her own shoulders off, will be a great catch."

"She has proposed to me twenty times," replied Captain De Crespigny, "but I am not to be had! It would be necessary for me to hang all her relations, they are so vulgar! The second looks as fat and round as from yesterday till next year; but if she were less like a turbot standing on end, more like the person I admire most in the world, and se-

veral years younger, possibly I might propose."

"If you thought she would have you," replied Mrs O'Donoghoe, laughing, "you would propose without minding the years. If a girl had eighteen pence, you would propose instantly, for fear she might spend a shilling of it!"

"I am told Miss Crawford was born in diamond ear-rings," said Agnes. "She looks as if it had rained precious stones on her ever since,—as if she had been pelted at the Carnival with diamonds instead of sugar plums! The price of blond and feathers is raised in every town where the Miss Crawfords arrive!"——

"The Miss Crawfords must not be ridiculed!" interrupted Captain De Crespigny, looking very magnanimous, "at least by any one except myself! They are my preserve! They both dress in the last extreme of jewellery to please me; and I am pleased. If I have a weakness in the world, it is for dress; and, in my opinion, ladies ought all to shine like glow-worms every night. Look at this

indefinite article of a man approaching! Tall, and covered with orders, he looks like a house insured! Who can he be?"

"Never distress yourself about who people are!" said Agnes. "Somebody's son, I believe, — and somebody's nephew or cousin, with estates in all the disturbed districts of Ireland."

"Very accurate and satisfactory! Watering-place imaginations are apt to be a little inventive; like Cuvier, who described the whole history and formation of any animal from seeing merely a single tooth! With that bottle-green coat and all that light hair on the roof of his head, he looks like a bottle of porter newly drawn, and foaming at the top. It makes me thirsty to see him."

"I excel particularly in biography!" added Agnes laughing. "That tigerish-looking man you are inquiring about, with all the little stars and bits of ribbon, had a whole regiment of horses killed under him at Waterloo! He saw sixteen colonels of cavalry lose their heads that day in battle, and he received fifteen mortal wounds himself, before he left the field!"

"Agnes, your stories would be as difficult to bolt, as the American oyster, which it took three men to swallow whole! You remind me of the man who contrived to place a fly's eye so that he could see through it, and he found that it multiplied everything, till a single officer appeared like a whole army. I never saw a man ride as that stranger did this morning! his horse is a mere spider, and he jumped up and down in the saddle like a cup and ball!" said Sir Patrick, laughing, "but the climax of all his atrocities was, five minutes ago, when Marion re-entered the room, I heard him request that the master of the ceremonies would introduce him to one of my sisters! I am at a loss to guess which, but here he comes, drawing on a splendid pair of gloves!"

"Pray do not let me be the victim!" said Agnes, shrinking back with a contemptuous toss of the head. "I have no turn for teaching a bear to dance! and I will not be made ridiculous by having such a partner! The ugliest man I ever saw for nothing! Is he a human being?"

"For my part, I do not feel that being ridiculous or otherwise depends on any one but myself," said Marion good-humouredly; "and if it will make a man, all ribbons and orders of merit, happy, to perform a quadrille, I have not the least objection to be his partner, especially when he wears such very clean gloves!"

"Miss Dunbar!" said the master of the ceremonies, approaching Marion in his most pompous manner, "allow me to introduce the Duke of Kinross!"

Marion accepted his Grace's offered arm, looking by no means so much petrified at the unexpected rank of her partner as Agnes did, who started, and coloured with evident vexation, at having even in thought rejected the greatest man in Harrowgate, the hero of all her castles in the air, and one who was considered as eminent for ability as for rank.

"Well, Agnes!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, in a bantering tone, "for the first time in a long life you have made a blunder. You who never, even at chess, would play a pawn, if you could move a knight or a bishop, to have ac-

tually rejected a ducal coronet. I thought that in general you could draw out people's whole histories and characters like an opera-glass, and see through them in a minute. You generally know everybody's peculiarities and everybody's value, who everybody is, and what everybody does, with notes and annotations of your own, all original and authentic, —who have elder brothers to impoverish them, and rich uncles to give them hopes,—in short, their whole biography better than they know it themselves!"

"To be sure! I am an inestimable cicerone, 'honest, civil, obliging, and thoroughly to be depended on!' Where other people have only two eyes, I have three, and I make it my duty to ascertain who brings a footman or an abigail, what carriages people travel in, what stay they intend to make here, whether they hire a sitting-room, or lounge, like Mrs O'Donoghoe, in the public saloon! I do believe the well-informed visitors at Harrowgate know exactly how much silver we carry in our purses every day, and what our washing-bills amount to!"

"Not much in some cases!" said Captain De Crespigny, fixing his satirical mischievous glance on a shabby-genteel stranger who seemed to be lurking near and watching the lively party with an evil eye. "Look at this dark figure leaning against the door in a sort of Italian bandit attitude, trying to look romantic with his arms stuck on like crooked pins, his neck-cloth perfectly strangling him, and his scarlet waistcoat like a robin-red-breast!"

"Is there a man in a waistcoat!! where? asked Agnes eagerly. "Another Duke, I suppose. He seems like the picture of a robber in some sixpenny story book. But how he stares at you, Captain De Crespigny! I declare that look would pin me to the wall!

"It is rather odd! Surely I have seen that man somewhere before! He must have dressed my hair at Brighton, or measured me for a coat at Dodd's. He is probably now the sort of L.200 a-year man who wears a gold chain and vagabondizes about perpetually from one watering-place to another! He seems by his look inclined to pick a quarrel with me; and, if he does so, I feel pretty cer-

tain he ought already to be sent among the valets below stairs, which he certainly shall be without much ceremony. What can the fellow mean by looking such daggers at me in particular?"

"One addition is expected to the Crawford party to-night, which will puzzle you all!" said Mrs O'Donoghoe. "That enchanting suite of rooms next the garden has been bespoken during the last three weeks, by some person whose name is quite unguessable! The landlady says that Mr Crawford has made her solemnly promise never to divulge it! Now! there is something worth knowing!—a dark unfathomable mystery in a place like this, is perfectly inestimable!"

"I undertake to solve it in twenty-four hours!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, with animation. "When there is a real undeniable secret to be ferreted out, I am wider awake than most people! I can do everything but what is impossible! If I fail, then, as the lawyer once pathetically exclaimed, 'may my head forget the wig that covers it!' What will you bet that I succeed? Here is my

betting-book to register our agreement; I never stir without it!"

"I have no turn for betting my head off my shoulders; but you shall have the Pigot diamond for your trouble!" replied Mrs O'Donoghoe. "I have been busy about it for three weeks in vain, going about investigating, with my glass at my eye, like Paul Pry, but the maids pretend to know nothing, and the landlady looks bursting with mysterious importance whenever she speaks of her coming guests!"

"Then I am twice a man when there is anything to be found out!" continued Sir Patrick. "If I had lived in the days of the Iron mask, that affair would have been probed to the bottom, and laid open. I have quite a genius for unravelling mysteries!"

"If so, I allow you three days for scrutinizing the expected *incognitos*, after which, do you promise and engage to furnish me with their numbers, names, professions, ages, fortunes —— ——"

"And expectations! certainly! Also to disclose why they came here, and when they

go away. Mrs O'Donoghoe! I delight in difficulties, and glory in conquering them! I abhor everything easy! Even if you were easily pleased, I should have less pleasure in fascinating you."

At this moment, a plain travelling carriage suddenly swept round the road leading towards the Granby, while in the clear moonlight it could only be discerned that two footmen sat behind, and two lady's maids were mounted on the dickey; but before the rush of gentlemen towards the lobby, which usually takes place on such occasions, could be successfully achieved, the chariot stopped at a garden-gate beyond the usual entrance, while in the dusky obscurity the most penetrating eye could not discover who or what alighted. A torrent of waiters streamed along the passages, a noisy outcry was heard summoning the landlady, every bell in the house seemed ringing simultaneously, and Captain De Crespigny was surprised to observe the dark, stern-looking stranger standing near the door, as if he belonged to the party, and yet did not wish to be seen.

A procession of four wax candles, and a tea-tray proceeding afterwards towards the newly occupied sitting-room, was all that the most enterprising observers could discover; and as there were but three cups, and Mr Crawford was known to have joined the party, it became very plausibly conjectured by Sir Patrick that there were but two new arrivals.

The supper-bell had been rung that evening about ten minutes, and a numerous bevy of gentlemen collected round it, varied by a scanty sprinkling of ladies. The table was covered with wine glasses and crystal decanters enough to fill a glass shop, with not a drop of anything visible to drink, except cold spring water; each gentleman had half a pigeon on his plate, and each lady a glass of jelly before her. The uproar of waiters, plates, tongues, and glasses had subsided, and the conversation was at so low an ebb, that there seemed every probability of the whole party being found asleep in their chairs next morning, when suddenly their attention was roused by the door being hurriedly opened by the *soi-disant* gentleman entering, who had al-

ready excited the notice of Captain De Crespigny.

Besides the eager curiosity felt in every small community, to see every one recently added to their number, this was a gentleman whom few of the company had seen before, and such a gentleman as is seldom seen anywhere. His dark hair hung in wild profusion over his head. There was an extraordinary wildness, almost amounting to ferocity, in his eyes, which had the restless glare of a wild beast's, as he quickly glanced round the table, while his pale haggard features, and the strong compression of his upper lip, gave him an air of irritable melancholy, along with a look of flustered anxious suspicion quite unaccountable. He seemed annoyed at having attracted any observation, while, if Banquo's ghost had appeared, the apparition could scarcely have awakened more attention, as the party had little to do, and nothing else to think of.

"One would fancy a kangaroo had come in to supper!" muttered he, angrily, glancing round with a look of scorching hatred at

Captain De Crespigny, and drawing his chair near Mrs O'Donoghoe, who was almost the only lady still remaining. He then cut himself a supply of cold veal, that might have dined a couple of grouse-shooters, with ham in proportion, not at all carved on the Vauxhall pattern, and glancing at all the observant eyes around the table, he added, endeavouring to look in a more amiable mood, while a most unpleasing attempt at a smile for a moment disturbed his features; "I see, gentlemen, you are somewhat amazed at my powers of mastication! I am not Dando; but let me tell you I could finish all we see, and pick the bones of that turkey besides. What man in his senses would profess to be hungry, and sit down to half a pigeon! You seem to be quite a Temperance Society here! Fifteen jugs of water in regimental order round the table! The waiters must have bottled off the Thames!"

A suppressed whisper ran round the table, circulating many wondering conjectures who the stranger could possibly be, for there appeared a vehemence in his tone, and an ir-

ritability in his eye, most repulsive and peculiar.

"That man looks as if he had stepped forth ready made, from one of Mrs Radcliffe's romances!" exclaimed Mrs O'Donoghoe, in an apprehensive tone, as she strolled away from the table. "Who can he be?"

"One of the swell mob! I remember his picking my pocket in Bond Street, last spring!" replied Captain De Crespigny, confidentially. "Did you not observe his bunch of skeleton keys!"

"You are quite mistaken!" interposed Sir Patrick. "He is one of the garden-room party! I saw him waiting for them in the passage; people of prodigious fortune I assure you! Their names are —— no matter what! but they have estates in —— I don't know how many counties!"

"He has rather an aristocratic look!" added Mrs O'Donoghoe. "The sort of arbitrary air, as if he were accustomed to command a regiment!"

"More like an unengaged actor from one of the minor theatres, or a travelling dancing

master. They are very well got up sometimes, and he is exactly according to the last 'gentleman's fashions for the month,' said Captain De Crespigny. "But certainly in some shape or other, a strolling gentleman-beggar; probably, like the dustman's dog, he answers to any name."

"Perhaps," added Sir Patrick, laughing, "one of those innumerable lecturers on astronomy, who are constantly tormenting me with prospectuses. If any man whatever is in distress, he puts on a decent coat, and announces a popular course of lectures, in which he makes the comets ten times hotter than ever, and the stars as many millions of miles distant as he pleases, shows plenty of diagrams, talks big about Sir Isaac Newton, gives a dissertation on the political economy of the moon; tells a few anecdotes, hazards a few conjectures, doubts what everybody believes, or believes what everybody doubts, and his bread is baked. I mean to try the plan myself some day!"

"Depend upon it, he is a peer of the realm," added Mrs O'Donoghoe, more impe-

ratively than before. "I heard that Lord Wakefield was expected to-day. His sister, Lady Jane, whom I saw once at a Spitalfields ball, was thin, with dark hair, exactly in that style!"

"I have no doubt he is an Earl one day, and a Duke the next, as it happens to suit his fancy; and if you look well at him, Mrs O'Donoghoe, he has a coronet tattooed on his forehead," whispered Captain De Crespigny. "That is the very last new fashion for peers."

"Coronets are falling into great disuse now; so I am glad they are to be displayed any where," replied Agnes. "Lady Towercliffe's eldest son, Lord St Abbs, used to have one embroidered on his pinafore; but the coronet on Lord Doncaster's chariot now is almost invisible, and not larger than you would use for the seal of a note."

"I know whose taste ought to be paramount, in ordering the next carriage bearing the Doncaster arms," whispered Captain De Crespigny, throwing a world of arch expression into his countenance. "How exceedingly well our shield would look, quartered

with the lion rampant, and the eight roses of the Dunbars !"

Agnes did not, as she would have done formerly, on hearing so broad an insinuation, look down and blush, or attempt to blush; but she fixed a long and searching look on Captain De Crespigny, during which her large lustrous eyes betrayed an inward struggle between the interest with which she would once have gathered up every expression of his voice, and the lurking angry suspicion she now felt of his sincerity; but her confidence was in some degree restored, when, keeping up a lively dialogue till the last moment, he assumed his most becoming looks, and escorted her to the door.

"Pray Miss Dunbar," said he gravely, "will you give me a very serious answer to a very serious question?"

"Perhaps I may," replied Agnes, looking rather startled.

"Then, whether do you think ladies or gentlemen are the greatest humbugs?"

"Gentlemen, certainly; for they often pretend to feel what they do not, but ladies conceal what they do."

CHAPTER II.

La fortune tourne tout á l'avantage de ceux qu 'elle favourise.

"A perfect constellation of beauty, rank, and fashion!"
MORNING POST.

MARION and Sir Arthur were engaged next morning to meet the Granvilles at breakfast in the private parlour of Mrs Crawford, and they had advanced considerably in the consumption of their muffin and first cup of tea, when a very plainly dressed young lady glided into the room with a timid, agitated step, and giving a slight nod to the party, silently seated herself beside Marion, who, in compassion to her apparent shyness, averted her eyes. She seemed recently recovered from an ill-

ness, being thin and emaciated to excess, while it appeared as if her hair had been entirely shaved off, as she wore a cap fitting close to her face, and neither curl nor braid to vary the almost spectral whiteness of her whole aspect. Marion ventured a second glance at the interesting invalid, and observed a smile quivering about her mouth, which she seemed vainly endeavouring to suppress, and a sly glance towards herself, which enlightened her in a moment, for, with an exclamation of joy, she sprang from her seat and was instantly embraced, with laughing delight, by her old friend Caroline, whom she had lately learned to know as Miss Howard, the heiress of countless thousands,—not the more, nor the less dear to her on that account, but still the beloved companion of all her early frolics and school enjoyments.

"I wished to try your powers of recognition, and Sir Arthur's," said Caroline, with tears of laughing and almost hysterical joy. "I am changed,—greatly changed, so that my best friends could scarcely recognise me,

and if my enemies were also deceived it would be well. Dear Marion! I am still pursued and persecuted by that wretched madman, the terror of our school days, the horror of all my subsequent life! My aunt finds her nerves so shattered with the whole affair, that our kind friends here have undertaken me for a week or two, and it is thought that, amidst the crowd collected at Harrowgate, I may be in comparative safety. My life has been rendered almost a burden to me in the country, where not a corner of the earth seemed safe from that wretched creature's intrusions, and it is thought that he must bribe some of our servants to betray all my plans; yet, among them all, I scarcely know whom to suspect or whom to trust! Remember, dear Marion, that here I am to be treated as some humble cousin of Mr Crawford's, and on no account let your brother, or a living soul in the house, suspect that you ever saw me before. Agnes also must keep my secret, and Mrs O'Donoghoe, who has heard nothing of my real history, agrees to be my *chaperon*."

Then you should adopt her name, for

Patrick always calls the widow, "Mrs I-don't-know-who."

The most agreeable conversations are those of which there is generally least to be repeated, and that which followed, round the cheerful breakfast-table at Mr Crawford's, was carried tranquilly on, in a pleasing animated tone, on subjects of immediate interest as well as of permanent importance, showing, in the most prepossessing colours, characters, and feelings, inspired by the finest impulses which adorn the heart and mind of a Christian. Amidst the enlightened discussions and unreserved vivacity of a conversation, displaying the ease and fascination of high life, without its flippancy, frivolity, and pretension, those who have lived to discover that what is called the gay world, is sometimes but a dull world after all, might there have learned for what important purposes the power of speech and the power of thought have been given, if rightly used and enjoyed. There was the joyous relaxation of happy hearts and well-ordered minds, without the effervescence of empty affectation, or the flash

of bewildering excitement, which Marion had lately been accustomed to find among those who seemed little better employed than Domitian of old, in catching flies, and who prefer living upon exaggerated trifles, to enjoying that calm, rational, and intellectual intercourse which is registered in the heart for ever.

With feelings of deep and animated pleasure, Marion gathered from Mr Granville a rich harvest of sound opinions, amiable sentiments, and original ideas, while, with the free-masonry of real attachment, many a sentence, which seemed addressed by him to the whole company, attained its full meaning only in her heart. Richard was very seldom, as Agnes expressed it, "tuned up to nonsense-pitch." He wasted none of his hours on the mere flummeries of conversation, but the frequent sparkling of his wit shone the brighter for its occasional gravity; and never had Marion seen him in a more buoyant and happy frame than now, when developing the thoughts and affections of a mind and heart cultivated to the highest tone of refinement,

fortified by the strongest principles of religion, and imbued with a supreme regard for all that is noble, generous, or graceful in the conduct and character of others.

To Sir Arthur, the social circle imparted feelings of inestimable happiness. He had long considered human life as having nothing left for him now, but the one great opportunity to prepare for eternity, not to be trifled away in its smallest details; and he had remarked to Marion the evening before, after spending an hour in the public saloon, "I tire more of that Vanity Fair in the next room, than I would of breaking stones on the road! I should become an idiot before long, if I lived the sort of butterfly-life they do here, in a whirl of exhausting and frivolous amusement."

The respectful deference paid by Mr Granville to his age, his infirmities, and his high character, was in itself most gratifying to Sir Arthur; but more than all, he now saw his beloved Marion, surrounded by those who loved and valued her, the happiest of the happy. Inspired by the desire of pleasing,

and unchecked by any fear of being misunderstood or misrepresented, there was now a spirit and originality in her expressions, and a native eloquence in what she said, enlivened and assisted by a sunlight brilliancy sparkling in her eyes, and beaming in her whole countenance, which was beautiful to behold, while her partial and affectionate uncle thought there was poetry in her look, and music in every tone of her voice.

Their discussions diverged after a time to the scenery and remarkable places around Harrowgate, while Mr Granville, deeply read in antiquity, described with picturesque and most felicitous effect, all that seemed best worth visiting in the neighbourhood, enlivening his animated sketches with many amusing remarks and original anecdotes, and giving to everything he treated upon, some new and unexpected interest, while Mr Crawford varied the subject by an entertaining comparison of what he had seen and known abroad, particularly as connected with the Roman Catholics of Italy and France.

The convent which existed near Harrow-

gate having come under consideration, Mr Crawford described at great length what he had seen there during a visit which he had paid to it many years before, and recounted several almost traditionary anecdotes of former times, in which the names of Lord Doncaster and the Abbé Mordaunt, became almost insensibly blended, very much to their discredit, while Marion reflected with wonder and regret that such men were frequently now the chosen attendants of her own young and beautiful sister. There was degradation even in their looks, and still more in their conversation; but she hoped, trusted, and believed that the Abbé's influence would be terminated when Agnes discovered that his attentions were not really likely to influence those of Captain De Crespigny.

Mr Crawford mentioned with peculiar and melancholy interest the very beautiful niece of the Abbé Mordaunt, whom it was evident that he had intimately known, and very greatly admired, while he awakened the keenest interest in Marion and Miss Howard, by alluding to an abortive attempt he had made at

Beaujolie Castle, to take a last leave of Miss Mordaunt, after she had been beguiled into forsaking the faith of her fathers, and was supposed to be on the point of retiring within the walls of a convent.

Marion could not but smile at the description given by Mr Crawford, of his first and last visit to Lord Doncaster, when he had called at Beaujolie Castle sixteen years before, at which time the aged peer, though leading a life of retirement, made it by no means a life of solitude, as the vices of his early years enslaved him then as they enslaved him still, and the libertine of fifty years then, was a libertine now, when tottering on the brink of death. It became evident that the proprietor of Beaujolie Castle, though a great lord, was by no means in any respect a great man, being penurious in everything except the indulgence of his own vices and superstition.

"It makes me shiver yet," said Mr Crawford, "to remember the large cold hall, paved with a curious mosaic of black and white marble, and the chilling uninhabited room

into which I was first ushered. Your uncle, Lord Doncaster, Miss Howard, never at that time associated with any living individual of his own rank in life. Those who do not cultivate good society, are always in bad; and it was supposed that he had strong reasons against admitting any one to his residence. The drawing-room was like a lantern with windows on every side, the floor so polished that it might have taken fire from the perpetual friction, and a scanty Turkish carpet served but to cover half the slippery floor."

"I always wish, in such a room, to be rough-shod," said Sir Arthur, "or to wear skates."

"You will remember, Miss Howard, that no foot was ever allowed by your uncle to tread on its icy surface," continued Mr Crawford, smiling. "But pathways of green baize were laid along the floor in every possible direction, where it could be supposed that any reasonable person might desire to walk. A broad line stretched from the door to the fire-place, and tributary streams of baize branched off towards the sofa in one direction, and the

writing-table in another, while directly leading towards an invisible door in the bookcase, was a still narrower stripe, which it required some skill to keep upon rigidly."

"Were no sign-posts raised to point out the proper direction for travellers?" asked Marion. "Nor threats of prosecution held up in case of a trespass?"

"No! but I certainly did commit one unawares, for while examining the invisible door, it accidentally flew open, when a lady whom I could not distinctly see, hastily concealed herself, and beside her stood, without exception, the most beautiful boy I ever beheld, bright and radiant like a cherub. When I called him forward, he laughingly disappeared, and no sooner did I leave that room, than the door was hastily locked inside."

"It sounds like the prettiest romance imaginable!" exclaimed Marion, eagerly. "In that old house, and among so many ancient portraits, what could be more picturesque?"

"A poor relation of Lord Doncaster was at this time the talk of all Yorkshire for her beauty," added Mr Crawford. "Young

De Crespigny, then almost a boy, had come home, I remember hearing, and admired her only too much; but whether she married, or what became of her, perhaps you will tell me, Miss Howard, as I never heard?"

"Then you are not informed of all that has occurred in the world during your natural life, though you seem very nearly so?" replied Caroline. "Whenever I hear a story told, I like to put a hat on its head, a stick in its hand, and to send it travelling rapidly round the world; but the mystery relating to Mary Anstruther was, like that of poor Miss Mordaunt, and of others in the same house, carefully hushed up, and my uncle's family soon after moved to Scotland. Louis De Crespigny was, even then, I am told, formed to gain and to keep the heart of any girl, with a perfect consciousness of his own powers, and very little scruple in using them!"

"He still has a very deep sense of his own supernatural merits!" observed Marion, "and finds many admirers to agree with him, though I think his uncle must have been still handsomer once. The features of both are very peculiar!"

"I often think," said Caroline, colouring and hesitating, "that Sir Arthur's young friend, Henry De Lancey, looks as if the whole family of Doncaster had been distilled into one. He has the hair dark as midnight, for which my uncle was so celebrated, that remarkable drooping eye-lid, too, as if his eye-lashes were too heavy to be lifted with ease, and the magnificent outline of his profile."

"You are right," exclaimed Sir Arthur, in a deep, low, musing tone. "The madman Howard or Anstruther, who acted so long as my clerk, and still persecutes you, once hinted something of the kind, in an unguarded moment. I have been ever since on the watch to strengthen the clue, but in vain. If I could but live to see that mystery solved!" ——

"You shall!" said Caroline playfully. "What should hinder you? I must make it my business now, to ferret out more respecting the story of that Miss Mordaunt, which has faded into oblivion, like the thousand other wonders of the past.

Of course, she lived until she died; but where,
Or when, I never heard; nor you nor I need care!"

"But I do care," said Sir Arthur, earnestly. "It seems to me as if there were here some scattered links of the chain by which we might discover Henry's origin. Truth has been too long already at the bottom of a well; but we must invent some diving-bell to bring her up! It would give me satisfaction, whatever his connections are, to identify them!"

"May he live to wonder at his own good fortune!" said Caroline gayly. "People must exist twenty years in the world, as I have done, before they can find out what a strange place it is, and what extraordinary changes occur here sometimes."

Pleasure has a time-piece of its own, which certainly does not adhere to the ordinary measure, for hours and minutes most perversely run on, always fastest when it would be most agreeable that their course should be delayed. Marion seemed to awaken from a dream of enjoyment, when Sir Arthur struck his repeater at last, and found he had remained till nearly the hour of luncheon; but, before the party dispersed, they agreed to meet often with closed doors, in the same sociable way;

and, exchanging a thousand pleasing plans and anticipations of coming enjoyment together during the following few weeks, they then separated.

CHAPTER III.

——— However we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and won,
Than woman's are."

SHAKSPEARE.

HIGH Harrowgate, where the more aristocratic strangers and invalids annually resort, is nearly two miles distant from the mineral well, and from Low Harrowgate, which is infested by the more inveterate class of water drinkers. Placed far from the offensive odour of the medicated spring, on an elevated common, which still remains bare in all the uncultivated barrenness of nature, the broad green expanse is surrounded on every side by a wreath of miscellaneous buildings of every size and shape,

cottages, shops, lodgings, houses, villas, and hotels, all marshalled in a row, and, like guests at the ordinary, mingled without order or distinction; while, elevated above all, and conspicuous for its white-washed front and innumerable windows, stood the extensive building in which Sir Arthur had his sleeping apartments. Its aspect was extremely ancient, with a venerable stone roof peculiar to old times, and testifying to its great antiquity; while the more modern slates, or even thatch, on the surrounding dwellings, indicated a recent construction.

At High Harrowgate, a crowd of large consequential-looking hotels may be observed on every side, all unusually extensive in their accommodation, and apparently of nearly equal calibre; but visitors, after residing there some time, become aware that to those who prescribe gayety, as well as more salubrious air and water for themselves, there are but three hotels in Harrowgate. Invalids may be ill anywhere, and personages who wish to be exceedingly exclusive retreat into private lodgings; but for anything that can be digni-

fied with the name of society at an ordinary, the Granby, the Crown, and the Dragon, have by mutual agreement, established a singular monopoly, giving balls every alternate night, to which the guests in each house are reciprocally invited; the ladies and gentlemen of the Granby and Crown requesting the honour of being patronized at a ball on the following night; and each hotel provides a carriage for the transportation of its own party, in case any of the distinguished guests should happen by chance not to have brought their private carriages. Meantime, it is rather arbitrarily taken for granted, that there are neither ladies nor gentlemen at Gascognes, Queen's, the White Swan, or the Black; but residents at these houses are allowed to appear on sufferance, though not as invited guests; being merely "winked at."

At a Harrowgate dinner the travellers take precedence more according to the length of their bills than by any other criterion, those who have resided a month in the hotel going before those who have resided only a week, and the visitors of a week being far in advance

of all who arrived the day before. A Peer of the realm must sit below his tailor, if he arrived at the house after him, and no dispute about places can arise, as each individual's name is accurately ascertained in the morning, and a plate turned upside down on the table opposite where he is intended to sit, with his name distinctly written in ink on the china. A label is also attached to each bottle of wine, exhibiting, not the name of the wine, but the name of its owner, and half an hour before dinner, all the gossipping world at each inn, may be observed slowly pacing round the table, and carefully reading the name, style, and title of those with whom they are about to dine, illustrating their remarks by exchanging biographical anecdotes and remembrances connected with each successive person, as he comes under discussion. Thus, though many arrive at Harrowgate strangers whose "names were never heard," yet, after passing through the ordeal of this gossipping committee, stories and circumstances are gradually discovered or invented, by which each individual is in some degree identified.

Between High and Low Harrowgate, besides a broad circuitous high-road, two pleasant rural paths lead through the fields, on which a gaily-dressed crowd may be seen from peep of day in the morning, hurrying along in rapid succession to the well, with looks of anticipated disgust in the prospect of that strange compound of horrors which they are about to swallow, only comparable to the washings of an old gun-barrel. As Sir Arthur remarked, these waters seemed to have been invented for the especial affliction of elderly gentlemen, processions of whom might be observed drinking tons of water, in order that complexions evidently much the worse of wear might in the process of renovation, be mended, cleaned, dyed, and repaired, till they looked as good as new; and though the Admiral complained that, to his uncomfortable feelings, it always seemed as if he had swallowed the tumbler itself, yet he valiantly persevered in daily drinking bumpers to his own health, saying that what was good for so many others, would be good for his complaint, if he had

one, though, except old age and blindness, he was conscious of none.

In consequence of Sir Patrick's bet with Mrs O'Donoghoe, he was on the alert at an early hour before breakfast the next morning, to ascertain who the incognitos were in the garden room. For nearly an hour he sauntered on the common within sight of the Granby, exchanging gay observations with those who passed, listening with a satirical smile to Lord Wigton, who was practising to desperation some of Rossini's airs at an open window, and watching with astonishment the repulsive stranger of the preceding evening, who, closely buttoned up in a military surtout, with his hat slouched over his face, was rapidly pacing up and down, with ceaseless perseverance, close to the garden room, his eye fixed upon the windows and doors, making apparently so accurate a survey of those private apartments, that had it been by night instead of by day, he might almost have been arrested on suspicion of intending to attempt a burglarious entrance.

Not a mouse seemed stirring within these rooms, the blinds were all drawn down, and the doors all closed, but still the stranger paced rapidly up and down, casting many impatient irritable glances upwards on the silent walls, yet keeping himself so concealed that no one, looking suddenly out, could have perceived him lurking there. Sir Patrick now, for the first time, suspected that he did not in fact belong to the party within, and became more and more interested in observing his various eccentric movements, which betrayed a high state of excitement, till at length, finding himself watched, with the quickness of lightning he suddenly vanished round a projecting corner of the building, though a few moments afterwards Sir Patrick perceived that he was concealed in a thicket of trees not far off, where he could still keep his eye fastened on the windows with unswerving steadiness.

Parties, meantime, hurried onwards to Low Harrowgate to do duty at the well, while some of the loungers had already returned, being full charged with their quantum of wa-

ter, and all very loudly expressing their astonishment that Sir Patrick had not yet set forth to hear the military band, which was reported to be playing "beautifully! enchantingly! or detestably!" according to the humour of those who spoke.

The crowd was on this day so excessive, that the old well had been completely exhausted, and alarming apprehensions were entertained by the invalids, of a scarcity for the later visitors, but still Sir Patrick stirred not! Though not usually endowed with excessive interest in any affairs but his own, the movements of the mysterious stranger, and his look of feverish anxiety, engrossed almost the whole of Sir Patrick's thoughts, though, to avoid any appearance of espionage, he kept up a lively dialogue with Mrs O'Donoghoe and Captain De Crespigny.

Marion in the mean time had been exceedingly amused by the scene which usually takes place at the well, where every face seemed as if labouring under the nausea of sea-sickness, and she stood for some time with Sir Arthur and Mr Granville, laughingly

studying physiognomy, as parties arrived in rapid succession, threw off a tumbler of smoking horrors, and hastily departed, while a row of shabbily-dressed women, standing behind a stone counter, hurriedly filled the glasses, and handed them over in a long wooden ladle, to the expectant invalids, one by one, who were waiting patiently or impatiently for their turn. Each of the great hotels had an emissary appointed here, whose business it was to attend on their respective guests with the proper allowance of water, and it seemed as if these old women knew by a sort of instinct those who belonged to their own house; but an angry contest having taken place respecting one gentleman, who was obliged to wait with resignation or without it, till the belligerent parties had decided whose privilege it was to kill or cure him, Marion's attention was more peculiarly attracted to the spot, where one of the women who assisted in serving out the general beverage had been hitherto screened from her notice. Her face was excessively muffled up, but in the little that remained visible, traces of beauty still

remained, though her features were so attuned to suffering, that Marion with wonder and pity contemplated so pale and ghastly a form. At length a dim idea stole into her mind, that surely she had seen that face before, but while the floating remembrance yet continued to flicker indistinctly through her mind, the wretched-looking woman, with a startled glance, had vanished.

"Patrick!" whispered Marion, turning to take her brother's arm, "do patronize me for one minute! Did you observe that melancholy-looking woman at the well? I never saw so blighted a countenance! What can the sorrows be that stamped such a look of ghastly woe upon these beautiful features?"

Marion looked up for a reply, and started to find that she had inadvertently taken the arm of Captain De Crespigny, whose usual vivacity and presence of mind seemed at this moment to have entirely forsaken him. His eyes were straining after the receding figure of the stranger, with an air of eager astonishment and alarm, while his countenance had become white as death. In a moment, how-

ever, he recovered himself, when Marion, with an exclamation of surprise had drawn away her hand, making a hurried apology for her mistake.

"Did you not recognise her?" asked he, in accents of almost tremulous agitation. "It could be no one else! Surely that must have been —— Dixon?"

"It was!" exclaimed Marion, breathlessly. "How has she come here? what can she want? where is Agnes?"

"This must be inquired into!" muttered Captain De Crespigny, almost inaudibly; and then resuming his usual careless vivacity of tone and manner, he entreated Marion to let him benefit by the fortunate resemblance of his dress to Sir Patrick's, and still continue to escort her. "I envy Dunbar for the privilege whenever he enjoys it, for you shun me like a rattle-snake," added he, in his most insinuating tone; "yet I would not for worlds be your brother."

"It is but a troublesome office," replied Marion, looking anxiously round for Sir Arthur, who had walked on a few minutes be-

fore, leaning on Mr Granville, and most impatiently did she long for their return, being always on the alert to shun Captain De Crespigny without appearing to do so. Though like all other persons, amused and enlivened by his whimsical and diverting style of conversation, which had more even in the manner than in the words, and though with any friend of her brother's it pained her courteous nature to be otherwise than frank and good-humoured, yet she made a principle of unobtrusively evading his assiduities, not only because his conduct to Agnes had been and still continued unpardonably dishonourable, but she felt indignant to think that he was disposed to beguile his leisure by also captivating and deluding herself. It was obvious that whenever she entered the room, he became silent and embarrassed with every one else, and took the first opportunity of devoting himself exclusively to her. Not giving one shadow of belief to all his professions, when Marion was obliged to listen, she did so with unconcealed indignation on finding the same insinuations of attachment made to her-

self which had been repeated to her formerly with triumphant credulity by Agnes. Marion thoroughly despised his double dealing and ungenerous trifling, while feeling nothing for him on that score but contempt, she could almost have rejoiced that he wasted his efforts to be irresistible on one who, being so fully aware of his character, could incur no danger from the fascinations which had been fatal to the peace of many. Safe in the consciousness of a hallowed attachment to Mr Granville, and convinced that Captain De Crespigny was incapable of a single genuine feeling, she could scarcely have considered it necessary even to be repulsive in her manner; but it seemed due to Agnes as much as possible to avoid him, knowing that her sister had not yet been able entirely to divest herself of a lingering belief that the professions which were false to all others were sincere to herself.

For the first time in his whole acquaintance with lady-kind, Captain De Crespigny felt doubtful and diffident of his own fascinations, and for the first time also he felt himself real-

ly and undeniably in love, as the transparent single-hearted excellence of Marion's character seemed, when compared with the hackneyed and artificial mind of her sister, and all other girls, like the difference between a pure mountain breeze and a London fog. The attachment he so often affected had now become genuine, and the feelings he formerly invented for amusement, and expressed with the utmost fluency, were now so real, that they could scarcely be spoken at all; for language seemed to fail him when he addressed Marion, and every day, as it increased his attachment, diminished his hope. She had no vulgar love of admiration; and Captain De Crespigny was mortified to perceive, that while the colour mounted to her cheek at the slightest evidence of affection from her uncle or brother, all his own hints of a preference, all his fascinating attentions and irresistible speeches, were listened to with the same smiling good-humour as if they had been devoted to a third person. Marion always made some ready reply, without a *soupçon* of embarrassment, and seemed to take compliments, reproaches, love,

or despair, all as matters of course, which must inevitably be listened to with the same indulgent consideration she would have bestowed on Lord Doncaster's lamentations respecting his last attack of the gout. She did not even pay him the compliment to drop a single stitch in her knitting from agitation or from interest when he spoke to her; but all his words passed away like arrows flitting through the air, which leave not a trace behind.

Captain De Crespigny became, this morning, more than usually assiduous while they stood beside the well, referring to Marion's opinion on every subject, quoting what he remembered her formerly to have said, rejoicing in everything that seemed to give her pleasure, regretting the most trifling annoyance that fell in her way, approving of all her sentiments, and talking in raptures of old Sir Arthur, while eyes, smiles, voice, and manner, all indicated the feelings he wished to convey; but Marion merely congratulated herself, that having seen the cards already, she knew the game he was playing.

"Miss Dunbar!" said Captain De Crespigny, rushing eagerly forward to pick up a flower which the wind had blown out of her bouquet; "may I keep this rose?"

"Certainly! any gentleman may take a flower; but I never give one. There are twenty better in the garden."

"I would give all the twenty for this one. This is more precious than any thing except the hand that gives it. Indeed this is the only rose in the world I care for!"

"The white moss-rose is more fragrant, and not so common," answered Marion, indifferently. "That was beautiful an hour since, though rather the worse of wear now."

"I am so unalterable in my preferences, that even though withered and decayed, still it would be precious to me, as connected with recollections which I shall cherish till the world's end, and till the end of time! Flowers speak a language which words cannot express; and even if mine were to fade in an hour, let me enjoy it while I may. This rose does not hoard all its sweetness as you do!"

"Captain De Crespigny! if your conversation has a fault in the world, it is too plain, matter-of-fact, and unadorned," said Marion, with a careless laugh. "You have wasted a whole summer of lilies and roses upon me during the last five minutes, and I ought to answer you with a perfect conservatory in return; but it sounds dreadfully like the double-distilled essence of the Minerva press. I thought this very flourishing style of compliment had been worn out now, and given over, as old clothes are, to the race of abigails and valets. But here comes my sister; and, to speak in your own fashion, remember '*je ne suis pas la rose, mais j'ai vécu avec elle.*'"

To Marion's astonishment, Agnes merely strolled past, with her eyes earnestly fixed upon nothing, and did not interrupt her conversation with Lord Doncaster and the Abbé Mordaunt, by whom she was escorted, except to give a smiling nod to Captain De Crespigny, who seemed exceedingly surprised at her indifferent "how-d'ye-do" manner, and excessively piqued at the carelessness she either

felt or feigned, saying, in a tone of satirical wonder,

"The Abbé seems to have every probability of gaining a proselyte! He has been very successful among the lower orders lately, though, I believe, my uncle's ale and roast beef ought to receive great part of the credit; but I cannot be sufficiently astonished at our new convert!"

"I must discuss this subject with my sister!" replied Marion, pleased to observe Captain De Crespigny so much interested in Agnes. "It is wrong to have delayed so long asking an explanation; but I could almost more easily die for those I love, than distress them. My uncle would care too much on the subject, and Patrick too little; therefore it must devolve upon me to speak. We are to have a long drive soon. Let me consider! this is Tuesday—to-morrow will be Wednesday"——

"How clever of you to find that out! You would certainly have discovered the longitude!"

"No doubt of that! I have discovered a

great deal in my time; but in the mean while, I shall talk this over fully with Agnes to-morrow."

"Do not speak of to-morrow, when to-day is the happiest, perhaps, in my life! I wish there were no to-morrows! Such an hour as this appears to me like an aloe, which can blossom only once in my existence."

"You entertain very moderate expectations of life, therefore I think we may confidently rely on your being agreeably surprised by many days as pleasant."

"Then they must be passed in the same society; but Miss Dunbar, it always seems as if you would rather say 'Good bye' to me than 'How d'ye do!' You treat me with the most barbarous injustice! Your heart never teaches you to understand mine! Is it that you hate or despise me? You are so amiable to others, so charming, so everything that I could admire, yet to me your smiles are as cold and chilling as a moon-beam on snow. Be severe, satirical, anything but half absent and altogether indifferent, while you listen to me only with the ear and not at all with the

heart. I shall positively be obliged at last to give you up!"

"I wish you would! We might be the best of friends as well as cousins if you would only talk to me in an everyday manner, without rehearsing over those absurd Romeo-and-Juliet speeches."

"Let us then be friends now, and more than friends in time to come."

"Never! O never! Patrick has led you to disbelieve my engagement to another; but at all events, Captain De Crespigny, if we lived in separate planets, we could not be more entirely divided; and even in jest, I cannot allow any one to talk as you do, though I know it is merely an unconquerable habit you have of saying the same thing to every young lady indiscriminately."

"What a shocking aspersion! you seem to think me incapable of a single respectable feeling, but believe me, since first we met I have scarcely known whether there be another girl in the world but yourself! Every moment I can be with you adds something to the value of my existence!"

"Your civilities are all so complete a burlesque that I need never forget they are in jest!" replied Marion, looking considerably bored, and hurrying onwards, while Captain De Crespigny buried himself in melancholy silence and assumed a most perfect attitude of graceful despair. Finding the pause rather awkward, she added in an every-day, commonplace tone, "Are you going to hear Grisi to-night? I am told that large sums are given for places on the heads of those who have already secured seats!"

"If I go to Grisi's concert, the temptation is,—not to hear ~~him~~ her,—that you know very well,—too well! I have but one object in going anywhere, and that is, to meet you. *Esperer aupres de vous vaut mieux que jouir avec tout autre.* I must quarrel with that little shake of the head. It is a libel on my sincerity! Miss Dunbar! your face is a perfect printing-press, and publishes all you think! I wish you possessed the magical ring which enabled people to know exactly what was thought of them! You are in my debt several months of devoted attachment! Little

do you guess how often and how deeply your slightest words are pondered, remembered, repeated, and dwelt upon in my solitary hours, nor how constantly I wish, that the man in the moon, who employs his leisure in knitting people together with invisible cords, would, for my especial happiness, give us a few stitches."

"It must be his fault that we have been kept so very long together this morning. Where can my uncle be!" said Marion impatiently, "You are aware already, Captain De Crespigny, that I must receive all my brother's friends with civility. In that respect his authority shall be obeyed, as it is of no use quarrelling with the wind, but if you consider me indifferent, that is what I am and ought to be, therefore think me so always."

"That very indifference is distracting! Let me acknowledge, Miss Dunbar, that I may have deceived others, but you I never even wished to deceive,—others I have flattered, but no one can flatter you, because nothing can be said equal to what I think. I wish new words could be invented to express the

ardour of my sentiments! When we are together the present moment is everything! I have neither past nor future, neither hopes nor fears, but what are connected with you," said Captain De Crespigny with hurried impetuosity, while a rush of mingled feeling swept across his features. "I forget everything else when you are present, and neither know nor care where I go in your absence. I love you as I never loved before, and never can again. The world in short has only two divisions in my estimation,—where you are, and where you are not. Despise my attachment if you will, but at least believe in it."

"You grieve me to the very heart," said Marion in a low tremulous voice, for there was an irresistible air of truth in Captain De Crespigny's manner which startled and shocked her. "I never for a single moment could imagine you serious about anything! Life and even its most sacred affections seem all in your estimation a mere jest, to be thought of and forgotten with a smile. I trust it is so

now! I would not for worlds believe you in earnest! You seem really to have parted with your senses!" ——

"Or rather I found them from the moment I learned to appreciate you! Did you never hear, Miss Dunbar, that in this world two individuals are always created suitable to each other, who must both be miserable unless they become one, and you exactly fill up the beau ideal which has haunted me from the hour I left Eton."

"Why! De Crespigny!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, coming forward, "with that melodramatic air, you seem to be rehearsing a last speech and confession!"

"Or rather my first speech and confession," replied he, with a conscious laugh, "And Miss Dunbar! I must entreat you not to believe" ——

What Captain De Crespigny entreated her not to believe Marion did not wait to hear, as they had at last reached the Granby, and she rushed up to her own room, while he, as much astonished at his reception as a gentle-

man could well be, strolled slowly away singing to himself with angry asperity,

> " If she love me, this believe,
> I will die ere she shall grieve;
> If she slight me when I woo,
> I can scorn and let her go!"

CHAPTER IV.

How weak it is to pity Cato's case,
Who might have lived, and had a handsome place !

Marion had frequently sketched in her own mind a faint outline of what she should say to Agnes on the subject of her unaccountable intimacy with Lord Doncaster, who seemed to delight in making a parade of her preference for his society, especially in the presence of his nephew; but when Marion found herself at length alone one day with her sister, she felt her heart sink with apprehension, yet, being resolved to conquer nature, and do her duty, if possible, she approached the table where Agnes was seated. A large, foreign-looking book with gold clasps, lay conspicuously be-

fore her, which Marion discovered at once to be a missal, bound in antique boards of beautifully inlaid wood, with massy gilt ornaments, and illuminated by designs in the style of Albert Durer.

To hide her confusion, and begin the subject with advantage, Marion placed her hand on the shoulder of Agnes for some moments, and leaned forward, examining those splendid paintings, the singular beauty of which she admired, while expressing considerable amazement at the strange, distorted designs on the border, where animals with five heads and their faces all nose, were varied with fish mounted on legs, and birds exhibiting human countenances.

"These eccentric creatures resemble the figures in some horrible dream!" observed Marion. "But they are not a greater distortion from the truth of nature, than the Popish superstitions which they illustrate are from the truth of revelation. Nothing seems left in either of the perfect symmetry with which all things come from a Divine Creator."

"I am no controversialist," said Agnes,

indifferently. "I take matters as I find them."

"That is not the safest of all plans, unless you are very careful from whom your ideas are received. I have heard that there are writers in the Roman Catholic Church, such as Massillon, Pascal, and Fenelon, who were nearly as pure in Christian doctrine as ourselves, resting their hope on no merits except those of our Divine Saviour; but I should think, for instance, that no Protestant could gain anything from associating with such a man as the Abbé Mordaunt, who would disgrace any church. Dear Agnes, allow me for this once the privilege of a sister; not merely to love you with my whole heart, as I always do, but also to prove my affection by saying for your sake what is most painful to me, and may probably be annoying to you. It is with the greatest anxiety and surprise that I have lately been watching you"——

"Watching me!" exclaimed Agnes, starting round with angry asperity, and fixing her flashing eyes on Marion. "What right have

you, —— or what right has any living being to watch me?"

"The right of affection and kindness," replied Marion, with emotion, while a large tear glittered in her deep blue eyes. "We are motherless girls, Agnes, and therefore we owe each other the greater solicitude. There are many eyes upon you, less friendly, I fear, than those of a sister. If others were not placing a sinister construction on all they see, I might not perhaps have ventured to begin the subject; but as it is, I have no choice except to discuss it with either Patrick or yourself. Our kind uncle must not be agitated on any consideration; otherwise I have sometimes thought of asking him to take us at once away from this place."

"And pray, what has your mean 'watching' of my conduct, —— your police investigation, discovered, which might render so desperate a measure necessary?" asked Agnes, with a flickering colour in her cheek, and in a bitter tone of suppressed anger. "Wisdom will die with you, Marion! I ought to be duly sensible of my good fortune, in having

such a sister! Perhaps you intend obligingly to favour me with a few hints for the regulation of my conduct,—to honour me with a little of that valuable advice which I have not been sufficiently alert in asking."

"Agnes! I know myself to be in a most unsuitable position, when criticising anything in your conduct; but if I had died, and returned from another world with permission to speak, I could not be more entirely free from any personal motive. If I give pain to you, I give greater pain to myself; but every one combines in saying, that this old Roman Catholic peer, and his Abbé, are most profligate men; that they scarcely deserve to be well received by ladies of character; that the very glance of their eye is contamination, and that you alone, of all the ladies in this house, are singled out to be, not distinguished, but insulted by their attentions. Surely, Agnes, it is time for me to speak. Our reputation is all we have on earth—more precious to any woman than the wealth of the world, and more precious, if possible, to us, than to others, because we have no other depend-

ence. Patrick is every day on the brink of ruin, and must leave us before long. Our uncle —— but I cannot speak of that —— when he is gone, we shall be alone indeed."

"When that day comes, I shall be as sorry as yourself; but there is nothing to fear at present. Captain De Crespigny says, all old uncles or aunts who wish to be lamented by their young nieces, should die in the midst of a gay season, to interrupt the parties and balls; but good worthy Sir Arthur is more considerate than to incommode any one. When we do lose the Admiral, however, be under no apprehension of my remaining alone! I have made up my great mind upon that subject, and you will see that circumstances do not always continue the same."

"Nor people either, Agnes! I have long feared that you trust too implicitly in the constancy of Captain De Crespigny."

"Trust! Do you suppose that I any longer trust him!!" exclaimed Agnes; her colour rising, and her large eyes glittering with a strange expression of indignant contempt. "No, Marion! He has been represented to

me now, as he is, a heartless, vain, unfeeling coquet. All men are monsters, but he is the worst! I can be revenged, however! Even he, cold and indifferent as he is, shall repent! I shall blight his hopes, as he has blighted mine. I shall cross his views, humble and disappoint him. To inflict on him all that he has so wantonly and cruelly inflicted on me; to destroy his insolent triumph, and bring down the pride of his success, I would —— yes, Marion, I would, and I shall sacrifice the happiness of my whole life."

"Dear Agnes! do not say so! Do not even think so for a moment! What can you mean! Revenge would be a wretched satisfaction at best! If he has treated you ill" ——

"If he has!" interrupted Agnes, with startling vehemence. "Marion! the Abbé thinks he could never have married me, even had he wished it. That Captain De Crespigny became entangled, from the time he was a boy, in one of those horrid Scotch affairs, half a marriage, or a whole one, just as he pleases, and Lord Doncaster told me one day in confidence"——

"In confidence, Agnes! What confidence should ever exist between you and such a man as Lord Doncaster? an old *roué!* You ought to despise and avoid him!

"I am apt to think you are quite mistaken," replied Agnes, with a sudden assumption of haughtiness, while she shot an angry glance at Marion. "The last Lord Doncaster but ten, may have been a *roué*, or what you please, but I know nothing, and will hear nothing against the present."

"That is the very point on which I must speak!" answered Marion, hurriedly, her features working with agitation, while the blood rushed back to her heart. "In a case like this, where love or marriage are completely out of the question, our friends are all astonished that you, Agnes, who make no secret of liking admiration, should waste so much time in deep conversation with that really disreputable old Peer. Believe me, it gives rise to much animadversion, and even calumny, especially when connected with that new ornament you wear; and I begin seri-

ously to fear you may be persuaded into taking the veil."

"Only a bridal veil," replied Agnes, arranging her ringlets. "I am not quite so mad as you think. I certainly have adopted this badge! At Rome I shall do as Rome does. Now, Marion, as young Rapid says in the comedy, 'I shall take it a personal favour if you will not faint;' but the Romish faith suits me best, and I consider it religion in full dress, instead of religion in deshabille. I admire the almost theatrical magnificence of its ritual; —the splendid processions, the consecrated dresses, the superb music, the dazzling lights, the clouds of burning incense, the romantic convents, and the magnificent cathedrals."

Marion looked aghast with consternation and sorrow, while she listened in silence; but at length, in a tone of subdued and mournful indignation, she replied, "Is this, then, possible! that without one serious thought, you would forsake our holy faith, for a mere external mockery of religion! a solemn pantomime? Attracted by rosaries, crucifixes,

tinkling bells, and empty symbols, you would forget the lessons of our childhood, the church in which we worshipped with our father, the Bible which he taught us to revere. Surely, Agnes, you will consult a clergyman of our own persuasion, before taking rashly the most important step which a mortal can possibly contemplate,—which our parents would rather you had never been born, than that you took."

"Excuse me, for interrupting your sermon. It is against all rule, but it may save you a great deal of trouble," said Agnes, arranging her rings, and re-tying her bouquet; "my sole intention is to be of a similar religion to the man I marry."

"Do you still expect," said Marion, with a look of surprise, "to be Mrs De Crespigny?"

"Or Marchioness of Doncaster!"

"Yes, in due course of time, when Captain De Crespigny succeeds!"

"He never shall succeed," replied Agnes, setting her teeth, and speaking with stern determination, while her face became rigid as stone. "Captain De Crespigny has deceived

me, cheated me of my youth, hopes, and happiness. I have been fooled, trifled with, basely ill-treated. My heart is seared against any real attachment to another; but I shall be amply revenged on him. I shall destroy his happiness, as he has destroyed mine. Without his long-expected wealth and title, he will find that the butterfly is but a grub.——I mean to marry his uncle!"——

A dead silence followed these words. Marion made no exclamation, and did not even look at Agnes, but buried her face in her hands, with a feeling of unutterable shame and consternation. The very idea had never before occurred to her imagination, that her young and blooming sister could contemplate so degrading a sacrifice; but when, at length, she looked up, there was something in the proud, stern expression of that beautiful countenance, which forced upon her the unwelcome and extraordinary conviction that all had been said in earnest.

"Agnes!" cried she, gasping with astonishment; "that dissipated, horrid, dreadful man! Impossible! The miserable wreck of an ill-

spent life! A superannuated *roué*. Are you in jest? or are you mad?"

"Mad! or at least delirious! Marion, we have lived long together, and yet you do not know me! I am not one to sit tamely down, as you would do, and wash my heart away with tears! My sorrows are not to be closetted in silent desolation, but I must act. If hope and happiness are crushed for ever, he who turned my feelings to stone shall suffer for it! He shall no longer wind me on, and wind me off, according to his own caprice! It is like death itself to love in secret, but worse than death when it is known, and he does know all! He knows, believes, and rejoices to believe, that I have waited, suffered, hoped, and feared for him, and for him only; but I am not one to die of scorned love. Now every spark of my regard for him is crushed out. His vanity shall not have another moment's triumph over me," said Agnes, her eyes becoming frightfully brilliant. "My heart feels as if it were buried in a snow-drift, and nothing warms it but the hope of vengeance."

"Agnes! who in her senses would think of

being consigned to misery and contempt both here and hereafter, merely to punish one who ought to be despised! If Captain De Crespigny be vain, foolish, and unprincipled, is that a sufficient reason for you to become degraded, and, I must say, infamous!" said Marion, in a tone of undisguised disgust, though her voice made no more impression than the gentle wave on the hard and unbending cliff. "Such a step as this would separate you for ever from those you have most reason to love."

"I am one of the Positive Club, Marion, who never change their minds about anything! and my resolution is unalterable. 'Tis best repenting in a coach and six.'"

"Think, Agnes, not of the short triumph over Captain De Crespigny, but of the long years that must follow,—of the living death you must endure, linked to vice, decrepitude, and immorality, lowered in your own eyes, and contemptible in those of others."

"Mistaken as usual, Marion! a life of mediocrity would be a life of misery to me, and few people think the worse of any young lady for becoming a Marchioness. Lord Doncaster

can give me everything except happiness, and I must find the best substitute for that in my power. A blight is on my heart! my pride has been mortally wounded; but I cannot undertake a cold, insipid, colourless existence, devoid of motive and of hope. It would be ennui drowned in wretchedness if I return jilted, mortified, and disappointed, to our uncle's dog-hole of a villa at Portobello?"

A red spot burned on Marion's cheek, and indignant tears, occupying the place of words, glittered on her eye-lashes, while her thoughts reverted to their generous, kind-hearted, and high-spirited uncle, whose affection was so undervalued by Agnes, and whose better feelings were about to be so outraged by the announcement of a preposterous and really disgraceful project.

Agnes now assumed the dignity of a peeress in expectancy, looking cold, resolute, and haughty, till at length Marion, overcome with emotion, threw her arms round the neck of her sister, and burst into tears, saying, in accents of incoherent affection,

"Agnes, — dear Agnes! take pity upon

yourself. Lay open your heart to a kind Providence,——pray for peace, but do not barter yourself for revenge. Do not become utterly lost, as well as unhappy! For my sake, for everybody's sake, let us go home as we came! Life is only precious for the eternal hopes and the domestic affections it bestows. Would you rashly throw away both, bringing on a lifetime of unpitied remorse?"

Marion looked up with anxious solicitude, but scarcely had she ceased to speak before Agnes glided out of the room, leaving behind her the splendid missal adorned with Lord Doncaster's arms in gold upon the white parchment binding. Beside it lay the envelope of a letter, with a marquis' coronet on the seal, and underneath was engraved, to her astonishment, the exact date of Agnes' birthday. Marion started when she saw this absurd piece of gallantry, and covered her face with her hands, as if she never could show it again.

> She did not know how hate could burn,
> In hearts once changed from soft to stern;
> Nor all the false and fatal zeal,
> The convert of revenge can feel.

CHAPTER V.

For if she will, she will, you may depend on't;
And if she won't, she won't, and there's an end on't.

I open with a clock striking!

CRITIC.

THOUGH the leaders of fashion have decided that it looks greedy and gormandizing to be punctually ready for dinner, yet, at the Granby Hotel, no sooner does the clock strike five than the bell rings, and the instantaneous rush of company which then takes place towards the dining-room can only be compared to a congregation hurrying out of church, or to a flock of chickens in a poultry-yard assembling to be fed. Doors fly open,—guests are seen precipitating them-

selves headlong down stairs,—elderly matrons advance, leaning on their gouty red-faced husbands,—troops of marriageable daughters follow,—and solitary gentlemen are visible strolling forward in all the unencumbered independence of having no one to care for but themselves. The noise-meter then rises to a deafening pitch, when, to the din of a hundred tongues, is added the jingling of glasses, plates, knives, and forks, while the long serpent-like procession winds slowly into the room, and gradually subsides into places.

Amidst the moving mass of strangely mingled personages, Captain De Crespigny had offered his arm to Marion, which she did not seem to observe, but led forward Sir Arthur, while all eyes were turned upon Agnes, who walked beside Lord Doncaster, with burning cheeks and downcast eyes, yet affecting to look superbly dignified.

Sir Patrick, in the mean time, always on the *qui vive* for variety and adventure, entreated Mrs O'Donoghoe's permission to sit between her and the young lady under her charge, who attracted his especial notice be-

cause she so obviously suffered from that apprehension of being conspicuous, common to strangers on their first appearance at a public table, and was dressed with a degree of plainness which amounted almost to eccentricity.

"I lose no time in making new acquaintances here," whispered he aside to Mrs O'Donoghoe, with a glance at her timid companion, who had become a perfect aurora of blushes as she seated herself at the table. "Our short visits at Harrowgate scarcely leave me five minutes to spare for each new face."

"Then I hope you do most of the conversation yourself, for I suspect the young lady, who was placed under my *chaperonage* by Mr Crawford, is not so much accustomed to live upon airy nothings, and to run up *impromptu* intimacies as you are."

"The sooner she begins then, the better. I have a thousand things to say to her!"

"Perhaps she may not have time for above five hundred of them. You must talk to her like a dialogue book, supplying both the ques-

tions and the answers; for, as far as my experience goes, she seems to be shockingly silent and nervous. Are you generally reckoned amusing?"

"Every body agrees in considering me so, and many people think me quite the reverse, but I can be either the one or the other on a moment's notice."

"Indeed! a little of both, and a great deal to spare! I imagine it all depends on which way the wind blows!"

"Exactly! I am sentimental in a westerly breeze,—cutting and sarcastic in an east wind,—noisy and boisterous in a northern blast,—and, during 'a southerly wind and a cloudy day,' the genius of nonsense takes possession of me so completely, that I have bestowed on myself the privilege of saying whatever I think."

"How shocking! I do not particularly fancy you in any of these moods!"

"Adagio! do not condemn me yet! choose your own subject, concerts, sermons, pic-nics, dress, Harrowgate water, or the last new novel, nothing comes amiss to me! I mean

soon to publish a weekly programme of the five or six subjects to which all conversation at the Granby is usually limited;—a complete set of the questions invariably asked by all the visitors every day, with a sketch of the most appropriate answers. For my own part, all my replies are given by rote, and it puts me out entirely, if the inquiry whether I have been at Ripley, comes before the question how I like the waters, or who was the last arrival, which is, *à propos*, the only subject on which I am not very well informed."

Sir Patrick saying these words, gave a sly glance towards his left hand, where the young *incognita* sat, without apparently listening to what passed, and as she seemed at the moment to be looking another way, Mrs O'Donoghoe archly turned round the label on her bottle of wine, so that the young baronet could read that it bore, according to custom, the name of its proprietor, "Miss Smythe."

Nothing could be a more complete balk to curiosity than such a name. Sir Patrick had already known seven Mrs Smythes. His washerwoman was Mrs Smith,—his sister's

governess had been a Miss Smith,—two Captains in his own regiment had gloried in the name of Smyth,—and his old Colonel's widow was Mrs Smith. There was no individuality in the name, but a whisper had reached him in the morning that a Miss Smith, the authoress of several popular romances, was expected at Harrowgate, and a horrible apprehension crossed his mind that, young as she looked, this might actually be the culprit, his surmises respecting which he could not but whisper to the laughing widow, adding, with a look of comical consternation,

"Only think how my portrait will look in her next book! There is no escape, unless I faint away immediately and am carried out! We must remain together now as long as I stay at Harrowgate, for no change of place is allowed. Even if you and I quarrel there is no remedy! It is like connubial felicity, we are settled here permanently for better or for worse."

"It might certainly be worse! I am tolerably resigned to my fate, for I sat till lately among the dullest set of hum-drum bores

who ever ate a potatoe; but you are so clever, I always become clever in your company."

"That is a novelty, I suppose?"

"Why! for that matter, my mind is like a piano-forte, which requires to be skilfully played upon," replied the widow gayly. "I have often been offered large annuities by people, merely to live in their houses and entertain them, but lately I was in danger of falling into a state of sensible every-day dulness."

"Impossible!"

"You may doubt it,—anybody would,—but actually yesterday talking to Lord Wigton, I was threatened with a fit of prosing!—a thing I never was subject to, and I never heard it had been in our family! Whether do you dislike most, a professed wit, or a professed proser, Sir Patrick?"

"My favourite society is, any old lady of seventy, who has met with great misfortunes!"

"Well! I am not much upon that pattern certainly, but fifty years hence, we might

make an appointment, perhaps, to meet here again."

"How many successions of visitors will before then have flourished in this house, and vanished. Even after the interval of one season, a visitor's return is like coming back from the grave. Nothing is remembered of either yourself or your cotemporaries. Guests, waiters, landlords, and even Boots, have all disappeared."

"Very affecting indeed," said Mrs O'Donoghoe; "but half the dinner has disappeared during that long moral discourse of yours, Sir Patrick. Among the transitory things in this house, pray enumerate another time the *entre-mets* and vegetables."

"Pardon me! these dishes reappear only too often. I have known some of those pies intimately for several days. In our regiment we called such revivals 'old clothes,' and it really is too bad treating ninety deserving people so ill."

"I should like to live upon the diet of a cameleon! Eating is a vulgar necessity which the mind despises," observed Mrs O'Donoghoe,

helping herself to a *paté;* "but some of the company here seem *né pour la digestion*, talking love and sentiment over a haunch of venison! Mr Crawford tells me that an Indian dinner party lasts twelve hours, and people who sit down as thin as skeletons, rise from table quite corpulent."

"It certainly does require the aid of refined conversation to keep up our self-respect in a scene of such gormandizing. For my own part, I live upon anti-pastry principles, and am also a no-vegetable man; but I wish haunches of venison had never been invented! I made fifteen mortal enemies by the last I carved in this house, because no one thought I had given him the best slice," observed Sir Patrick. "I wish all men like old Doncaster, who eat more good things in a day, than they say in a year, would dine alone."

"But I think," said Mr Crawford, "that the habit of meeting at meals is one of our most excellent social customs! If each individual in a family were merely to snatch a morsel when hungry, there would be no reunion, and often no intimacy among members

even of the same household. I like frequently to trace the usefulness of old-established customs, which have been sanctioned by successive generations, because the advantages are always so much greater than they at first appear, that it has now become quite a sufficient reason for me to respect any custom, when I find that it is an old one."

"I take the liberty of thinking quite the reverse!" said Sir Patrick. "Change is the very essence of enjoyment! change of habits, change of company, and change of air, are all equally necessary, and I never have a guinea in the world without instantly getting it changed. That custom will make a scarcity of silver at the bank, when I marry the heiress Miss Howard."

"You!!" exclaimed Mr Crawford, his very wig standing on end with surprise, while the young lady next him coloured to the very tip of her fingers.

"I beg your pardon!" said Sir Patrick, turning to her with one of his most winning smiles. "I thought you gave symptoms of speaking?"

A torrent of blushes being her only reply, he began to doubt whether she had the faculty of speech at all, and having decided at last that the young lady was either a statue or an idiot, he turned to his more accessible neighbour, muttering in an under tone, "Mute as a fish! An exhausted receiver! I never saw such a genius for shyness! Her very cap-strings are blushing! But about Miss Howard, my friend De Crespigny, who was born and educated for the very purpose of marrying his cousin, wishes me to take her off his hands, and if I could have sold myself, which I cannot, she might have done! I am told she is very romantic, so he and I agreed once to get up an amicable duel for her, and after that I was to waylay the mad cousin who persecutes her, and horse-whip him!"

"Nothing like a spirited beginning," said Mr Crawford, in agonies of risibility, while the young lady on Sir Patrick's other side, after an evident struggle, during which the ever-deepening colour in her cheek became perfectly scarlet, at length burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, so full of fun and

glee, that the young Baronet instinctively joined her, though amazed and perplexed beyond measure by the oddity of her manner, and by her unspeakable silence. "Your love," added Mr Crawford, "is to be more in the heroic than in the pastoral style."

"Never was there a Captain of Huzzars so preternaturally in love at first sight as I should have been! De Crespigny tells me she is first cousin to Crœsus!—has land in every country, gold in every bank, the mines of Golconda for a part of her portion, carries a million of money in each pocket, and changes horses three times in driving across her own estate! I should think myself rich to be five minutes in her company!"

"I see you are half in joke, and wholly in earnest," said Mrs O'Donoghoe. "But some gentlemen certainly do speculate in matrimony exactly as they would in the public funds. So my poor husband used to say before he left me so handsomely provided for. As for Miss Howard's hundred lovers, they will have but one idea amongst them,—money! money! money!"

"Love for an heiress certainly has the most solid of all foundations. How much better to be married for your fortune than for your dancing or singing, your pedigree or connections! There can be no mistake in pounds, shillings, and pence! De Crespigny tells me she is said to be not only very rich, but very plain, therefore as people generally marry their opposites, we shall suit exactly."

The timid young lady had now fallen into a perfect paroxysm of blushes, and an extraordinary twitching about her mouth betrayed the last extreme of nervousness, though whether her agitation were not of a risible nature, Sir Patrick felt somewhat perplexed to decide, especially as she was seized with a fit of coughing which appeared almost like laughter, while she hastily drank up the water in her finger-glass, threw salt over her pudding, and committed a dozen of absurdities, which caused the young Baronet to ask himself whether she were in possession of her fifty senses. A moment afterwards, Sir Patrick felt his arm convulsively grasped by the young

lady, as if for protection, while a half-suppressed scream burst from her lips, and she clung to him with an aspect of breathless terror, her lips parted, her cheeks livid, and her eyes almost starting from her head, as she gazed anxiously after the receding figure of a man who was hastily leaving the room.

Sir Patrick, when thus unexpectedly appealed to, started from his seat to offer assistance, though at a loss how to act, when, seeing Miss Smythe's countenance become of a ghastly paleness, he rapidly poured out a tumbler of water, and held it to her lips, proposing, at the same time, to support her out of the room.

"No, no! I am better here!" replied she, in trembling accents. "I —— I need society! I am so nervous! It must have been some dreadful mistake! Excuse me, I would rather remain!"

Mr Crawford, in the mean time, had rushed hastily out of the room; and, having now returned, he made a signal, as if desirous to escort her also; but to this implied proposal the young lady only answered by an almost

imperceptible shake of the head, while she fixed her eyes on her plate, resolved apparently to remain stationary. To the great surprise of Sir Patrick, two tall footmen in plain livery now placed themselves behind her chair; and, having afterwards closely followed her when the ladies retired to tea, they were observed lounging about in the lobby during the rest of that evening.

"What could be the meaning of such a scene?" asked Mrs O'Donoghoe, in an undertone of extreme curiosity. "Can you conceive, Sir Patrick, why the young lady started in that extraordinary way?"

"Yes!" whispered he confidentially. "I can explain, but do not mention this. It was because —— she couldn't help it! There is a sublime mystery of some kind at work here! I cannot dive into it! Suppose she were to turn out Miss Howard Smytheson *incog.!*"

"Oh no! that is impossible! Her aunt was coming with her, who is one of my most intimate friends!"

Never had anybody so many "most intimate friends" as Mrs O'Donoghoe. Every person

she met for half-an-hour, had the honour to be so designated, and if a gentleman were distinguished by the appellation, it was generally followed by a very plain insinuation that she had refused him. Of late, however, Mrs O'Donoghoe had been more cautious in such assertions, having been discredited in one of her many forgeries on the bank of truth, by its being proved, that she boasted of a proposal from Mr Crawford three weeks after it became known that he was already engaged to his second wife. Such accidents happen, however, in the best-regulated families!

CHAPTER VI.

"And I must say, I ne'er could see the very
Great happiness of the 'Nil admirari.'"

BYRON.

IT is absolutely indispensable that every visitor at Harrowgate shall go through a course, not merely of its waters, but of all the castles, ruins, rocks, lakes, gardens, and houses in the neighbourhood, and especially that, *bon gré, mal gré*, he shall spend one entire day in rhapsodizing among the splendid fragments of Fountain Abbey. The leading question asked of every visitor at the Granby, at least nine times a-day is, whether he has seen the Abbey, followed by exclamations of dismay and astonishment, if he have not. A shower of inquiries then follows, how soon he intends to go there,

after which no one forgets the exact day and hour named, while every good-natured friend fills up occasional gaps in the conversation by hoping he may be favoured with a fine morning for his excursion.

No stranger, unmarried and marriageable, at the Granby, has any right or title to the squandering of his own time, as the whole race of chaperons have assumed the privilege of knowing how he spends it, as well as of dictating the various ways in which he should and must dispose of himself; and, accordingly, Sir Patrick and Captain De Crespigny found themselves one day ensnared into a *soi-disant* party of pleasure to Studley, from which they had no more chance of escape than a brace of partridges at a *battú*.

As Madame De Staël remarks, "English weather does better to rail at, than if it were finer; and if Britain had a settled climate and a despotic government, there would be an end of all conversation." After a long succession of good-for-nothing days, during which the rain seemed to pour from a thousand water-spouts, till the world was in a perfect dropsy,

and it was feared the sun must have met with an accident, as he seemed unable to appear, he at last, contrary to custom, when a pic-nic is in the case, blazed out with unprecedented splendour, and became quite a spendthrift of his rays. September had evidently borrowed a day from June for the occasion; and yet Sir Patrick, who would much rather have encountered any danger than the smallest discomfort, staid an hour in bed to consider whether there was anything that might happen in the whole course of that day, sufficiently agreeable to reward him for the effort of rising. Except a fox-chase, however, nothing could have done so; and he secretly detested the very thoughts of walking five mortal miles, and spending five mortal hours in "doing the rural" among the dismal cloisters of a roofless ruin, or bush-ranging through damp shrubberies, with a committee of enraptured young ladies.

His fellow-sufferer, Captain De Crespigny, stood yawning and humming a tune beside him, waiting for the carriage, and expressing a hope, that though he had almost fallen out

of acquaintance with nature, and wished picnics had never been invented, yet perhaps, with the assistance of sandwiches, champagne, chicken pies, porter, music, and young ladies, the expedition might be endurable, when a noise of wheels grinding along the gravel attracted their attention, and Mr Crawford's carriage passed on its way to Studley, with the two tall footmen of the evening before, mounted behind. A moment afterwards Sir Patrick perceived the excited-looking stranger whom he had already remarked, leading his horse out of the stable, with a degree of haste and impatience quite unaccountable, while the animal seemed resolute to postpone the evil hour of being mounted, though his master lashed and swore at him with an extreme of cruel violence, which raised Sir Patrick's utmost indignation. He was rather strangely attired for so sultry a morning, being equipped in a large rough greatcoat, a thick neckcloth, a riding-whip, and a broad-brimmed, melodramatic-looking hat. Having at length mastered his refractory charger, he rode straight up to Sir Patrick, with a contracted brow,

saying, in tones of high irritation, while riveting his fierce eyes on the young Baronet with an expression that strongly betokened insanity,

"You are disposed to be observant this morning! We shall certainly know each other again! In which direction did Mr Crawford's carriage drive off?"

"I observe only for my own amusement!" replied Sir Patrick, haughtily turning away, and humming a tune.

"Allow me to remind you, that those who whistle before breakfast, may weep before night," said the stranger, with a malignant scowl, drawing back his lips, and breathing through his clenched teeth, as he glanced at Captain De Crespigny, and gallopped rapidly away, followed at a more moderate pace by the two gentlemen.

"I am in the humour to knock everybody down!" said Sir Patrick; "and there was an admirable opportunity lost! I dislike the looks of that man! He is evidently cracked! Depend upon it his skull will never ring again! Do you observe, De Crespigny, he

has nearly overtaken the carriage, and pulls up now, apparently anxious not to be seen by the servants. In days of yore we might have been certain he was a highwayman going to rob that barouche; but such things are done in a pocket-picking, petti-fogging way now, without an atom of spirit or adventure. Why! my good friend, what a very particularly brown study you are in! What is the matter?"

"Nothing! nothing!' I am solving an enigma! I must get another look of this man! Dunbar! years have passed since that voice rang in my ears, but it must be Ernest Anstruther's! Though shrill from excitement, and every fibre of his body seems dilated with madness, it can be no other, and we must have him seized this day. I actually shivered before the fierce glare of his eye; but let us forget it. I cannot speak upon the subject at present, for it involves all the deepest interests of my life. Now, then, for Fountain Abbey! I feel in the humour that I could strike the air for breathing in my face. It would be dangerous for anybody to ask me how I do!"

"I wish all gaunt skeletons of deceased houses were buried out of sight! The very idea of those damp mouldy walls would give me the rheumatism. Had we not better return?" said Sir Patrick, looking anxiously at his companion.

"No!" replied Captain De Crespigny, who seemed resolute to conquer his agitation, or to conceal it. "I say like Luther, 'if it rained madmen, let us go on!'"

"Then, my good fellow, you deserve to be put in a strait waistcoat yourself!"

"Well! if you will buy and pay for one, I have not the slightest objection to wear it."

"If we could get up a good old-fashioned belief in ghosts, for this occasion, and go to Fountain Abbey some other day by moonlight, there would be some sense in it," persisted Sir Patrick; but seeing that his friend was not to be dissuaded, he changed the subject, adding, "Our existence now is detestably matter-of-fact! I should like to have lived in the days of giants, fairies, witchcraft, and the philosopher's stone!"

"You would have required the last, Dunbar,

certainly! For an excursion commend me to Harewood House! It is like a fashionable residence in Park Lane! Such Brussels carpets, rosewood sofas, and damask curtains, that I felt quite at home; but here we have a bad road, and worse dinner. A refectory with no refreshments, and a kitchen fire, where a whole herd of oxen might be roasted whole, and not so much as a beef-steak to be had! Visitors may not even take, like the horses, a nose-bag with provisions."

"We might at least air the ruins with a cigar! Well! here are the ladies; and now that I have brought you here, and you have brought me, let us make the best of it. We must honour the old Abbey with a glance, though I am sure, before we are done, I shall be walked off my legs!"

"I knew a gentleman once," said Agnes, "who walked till nothing was left of him but his hat."

"It seems as if all the birds and butterflies in Britain had an appointment here to-day," said Marion. "How their twittering and mad spirits enliven me! That thrush is a

perfect Orpheus! Few can ever sing like these simple self-taught musicians!"

"Anybody can. Grisi, Pasta, you, or I, could," replied Captain De Crespigny. "It is pleasant, however, to be received with so lively a serenade. Those little creatures are happy without being able to say why or wherefore; and how often we ourselves are miserable, though unable to tell the cause, or perhaps, Miss Dunbar, to excite the pity we deserve."

"There is evidently a much greater proportion of happiness than of misery in the animal world, as they do not make unnecessary annoyances for themselves or others," said Marion, wishing to talk on indifferent topics, as she observed her brother watching to see how she received his friend. "What bird in all the world would you like best to be?"

"A canary, or a piping bullfinch, because you would keep me in a cage, and treat me kindly. I should wish to borrow the language of any living creature that pleases you! I am born to succeed in everything but in gaining

your approbation, which I would rather never have been born than live without. I could willingly go step by step round the world, to find out the secret of pleasing you; and I am falling rapidly into a Byron-like, misanthropic melancholy, because of your cruel indifference. How I wish emotions were communicated like electricity, without the slow vulgar use of language, for I always feel so much more than I can express, especially in your society."

"Why do you not take to writing verses; for you know poets all work themselves up into fictitious emotions, which they pour out upon paper, without troubling any one individual more than another, to believe or disbelieve them. Your poems might be lithographed for private circulation, and one of each sent to Agnes and me, to the five Miss Ogilvies, and to all Lady Towercliffe's daughters. You would require eight eyes like a spider, to look after so many!"

"But," replied he, in his most sentimental tone, "there is a want of which one might die in the midst of plenty. If all ladies were

like you, one might be surrounded by a hundred, and yet die of a broken heart!"

"Any one may break his own heart if he pleases, but he has no right to break other people's," replied Marion, jestingly; "and there are some who have no more scruple, I am told, in doing so, than in breaking stones on the road."

"Perhaps the hearts are as hard as the stones, if we may take yours for a specimen; but you really are becoming severe! Take care you do not hurt my feelings!"

"Your feelings!" exclaimed Marion, with a gay, half-reproachful laugh, as she caught the eye of Agnes. "I thought you only played upon the feelings of others, because you really had none of your own."

Near the gate leading into the superb grounds of Studley, no less than two-and-thirty carriages were assembled, from the low elderly gig and graceful pony carriage to the aristocratic barouche and four, not to mention tax-carts, phaetons, curricles, and coronetted chariots, filled with joyous groups and laughing faces. The landscape around seem-

ed as if coloured in the rich deep tints of some ancient painter pre-eminent in his art, so bright, so distinct, and so immoveable in its rare and singular beauty, serene and lovely, like a mind at peace. The pencil of Poussin or of Watteau could scarcely have done justice to such a scene. The air was literally raining sunshine, and a light cloud here and there sailed across the blue sky from the foreground to the distant horizon, while the rich canopy of massy trees over head, tinted with the many-coloured hues of autumn, and the carpet of velvet turf beneath, were enlivened by a thousand birds, hopping sportively from bough to bough, like feathered arrows, and by the gay insect world fluttering in rapid career from flower to flower, humming aloud their ceaseless sounds of joyful activity.

Every walk was sprinkled over with gayly-dressed loungers, sunning themselves in the bright atmosphere, and no flowers in the field looked more fresh, more natural, or more lovely than Marion, whose beauty had never appeared more attractive than now,

amidst all the sumptuous magnificence of nature, which seemed on the present occasion to be adorned in her full dress regalia.

"This is a very tolerable imitation of a fine day!" said Captain De Crespigny, shading his eyes to gaze around, and looking as if the landscape were made on purpose for him. "I see determined admiration in your countenance, Miss Dunbar, but I mean to outextacy you altogether in my expressions of rapture! Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains."

"Charming!" said Marion, absently, and looking round for Sir Arthur. "I am glad you are pleased."

"To be sure! you are pleased, I am pleased, everybody is pleased! This was called a party of pleasure, and nothing could be a party of pleasure to me, unless you were included; but now all the world is here! at least those who are all the world to me, and I expect a day of perfect happiness."

"That is as much certainly as any reasonable person can reckon upon, and I believe it is more likely to be enjoyed in the simple

rural pleasures of the country than anywhere! Some persons whom we might almost envy, think it pleasure enough for a whole day to find a tom-tit's nest, containing, for a wonder, five eggs instead of four, or follow the flight of a king-fisher during six whole hours, at full speed, in a morning, to see where he feeds, and can talk for half a day about some new combination of colours in a pansy or chrysanthemum."

"And yet they would be reckoned silly and vulgar, to speak half as long about a new combination of colour in a ribbon, which is in my estimation quite as interesting! If all those who detest the country, had courage to confess it as I do, how the shades of rural life would be deserted, and volumes of rural poetry cast into the fire! I am not one to 'hang a thought on ev'ry thorn,' and indeed my thoughts have thorns enough already!"

"There is too much still water at Studley, and the grounds are altogether too artificial for my taste," said Marion. "Those little ponds, like globes for gold-fish, are dull and uninteresting."

"They resemble china bowls, and should be filled with iced punch!" observed Sir Patrick. "Anything so like the basin of the Serpentine, reminds me of old women committing suicide! This is not a good sporting country, so crowded with laurels, temples, statues, cascades, and that sort of trash! I wish we had all staid at home, and looked over Turner's views of Studley, for they are beautifully done!"

"Yes!" said Agnes, yawning, "I like the works of art better than nature, pictures, statues, books, or pianofortes; and," added she, with a withering look at Captain De Crespigny, "I like human nature least of all!"

"What has set you off Childe-Haroldizing this morning, Agnes?" asked Sir Patrick, with angry surprise! "Strike me poetical, but I like Marion's style of admiring, exclaiming, and wondering the best, for it is not either overdone or underdone!"

"You shall have a most intelligent guide, Sir, immediately," said the superintendent of the lodge, civilly touching his hat to Sir Patrick.

"Let him be deaf and dumb, if you have any compassion for me! It is trouble enough to come here, without listening to an endless rigmarole about ancient abbots, clustered pillars, and stone coffins. The fellow will not abate a single tomb or tree! I could invent a story quite as good as his, and equally true! 'built nobody knows when, and destroyed nobody knows how.'"

"I like to hear all, and believe all," said Marion; "but you remind me, Patrick, of the French lady, who said she wished to be taught everything in two words. Now let us summon up any little poetry that may be lurking in our composition, to admire those noble pillar-like elms, with branches so thickly clustered, that the wind can scarcely elbow its way through the leaves. Those shadows are magnificent, flickering across the road!"

"Give me an old post-horse instead of an old tree, and I shall call up much finer associations!" said Sir Patrick. "My sole idea of enjoying the country is connected with hunting, shooting, and fishing; but as to living for ruins, flowers, green trees, fat cows, rocky

mountains, and all that sort of trash, excuse me. They do for poets and painters professionally to rave about, but I care no more to look at that prodigiously aged tree before me, than at old Lord Doncaster, tottering behind us with Agnes."

"That tree, Sir, is a Spanish chesnut, 112 feet high, and 22 feet in girth," said the guide, in his usual business-like tone. "It has seen a hundred summers."

"Then it has certainly not lived in this country!" replied Sir Patrick, affecting to shiver. "There's a thing they call summer in England, made up of east-wind and fog, with a half-extinguished sun, trees trying to put a good face on the matter, a few leaves and flowers born apparently in a consumption, and one or two misguided birds mistaking the imitation for a reality, while chirping their notes all out of tune."

"This oak, Sir, is 500 years old," continued the guide, pertinaciously bent on executing his task; "it contains 300 feet of solid timber."

"And how many leaves are there on it? You never heard! Do you pretend to be a

guide, and not know that? The timber will cut up for a tolerable sum, which will suit the next heir."

"Have you the barbarity, even in imagination, to prostrate that kingly tree! look at its gigantic shadow on the grass!" exclaimed Mrs O'Donoghoe. "I really had, even upon our very short acquaintance, conceived a better opinion of you."

"Then be not rash in altering it! I am all you ever thought me, and more! At the same time I cannot but think, in looking at this immense overgrown prodigy among trees, how fortunate it is that they stop growing at last, or one such monster might at last overshadow the whole world. Now, it is a hundred years at least since the ground beneath that tree has been enlivened by a single sunbeam! Spare me all the exclamations of delight I see impending! Ladies are taught a taste for the picturesque as part of their full-dress manners, but the truth is, that you care no more for scenery, than for a painted sign-post."

"I have no eye to spare for the landscape," said Captain De Crespigny, glancing towards

Marion. "Therefore pray let us, like 'Puff in the critic, omit all about gilding the Eastern hemisphere; or about the setting sun pillowing his chin upon an orient wave.' Nothing gives me so mournful an estimate of people's general happiness, as to join what they call a party of pleasure! Such rising before day-light, such climbing of inaccessible hills, such scrambling on slippery rocks, and such eating of trash, which no one in an ordinary rational state of mind would ever dream of tasting! In short, it begins with the total sacrifice of all comfort, bonnets and dresses in jeopardy, as well as every limb of your body in danger, a great deal of forced vivacity, a number of old worn-out jests, a seat upon the damp grass, and returning home after sunset in a fog! If these are people's pleasures, what must their miseries be?"

"Certainly the most toilsome of all vocations is that of an idle man," said Marion. "I often think, when observing the extraordinary plans of life on which people set out in search of happiness, that if during one day in every year, we were all obliged to exchange the

modes of life we voluntarily adopt, it would produce universal misery. If Mr Granville were obliged to play sixteen hits at backgammon every forenoon instead of Lord Doncaster; if Patrick had to visit and condole with the sick all morning; if you had to blow the flute five hours a-day for Lord Wigton; if he had to hunt eight hours in your place; and if I must lounge all morning in the public room, like Mrs O'Donoghoe, how wretched each individual would be!"

"Very true!" replied Captain De Crespigny. "The various species of men are as different from each other, and as little calculated to associate, as the various species of animals. Sportsmen have a natural antipathy to literary men, politicians to jockeys, and infidels to Christians. Life is to each of these a perfectly different affair. Their feelings, desires, habits, occupations, and pleasures, are entirely opposite, their conversation quite unsuitable, and they all hate each other."

While Sir Patrick, with ceaseless vivacity, teazed the guide by asking a thousand unanswerable questions, the replies to which

should have occupied several hours, he amused himself with making premeditated blunders and lively questions, enough to bewilder the brain of their matter-of-fact conductor, who hurried forward with a velocity of body disproportioned to the slowness of his understanding, pointing to an arbour elevated high upon the ridge of a hill, from whence he intimated that the finest view was to be obtained. With a rueful grimace, Sir Patrick prepared to make a forced march in that direction, measuring the height with his eye, and protesting that the fellow certainly had an ill-will at him for imposing such a task, when he was falling to pieces already with fatigue.

Marion, in the mean time, looked as happy as she felt; having now achieved two very great pleasures, as, in the first place, Captain De Crespigny had been called away by his uncle, and, in the second, he was succeeded by Sir Arthur leaning on the arm of Mr Granville. The smile of confidence and interest with which Marion now listened and talked, when contrasted with the constrained attention she had bestowed on Captain De

Crespigny, was like the difference between the glowing warmth of a summer morning and the icy brightness of winter. While loitering along their beautiful path, picking up here and there a wild flower, or pausing to enjoy the verdant beauties of nature in her holiday garb, cold would have been the heart, and vacant the imagination, not crowded with thoughts and feelings of poetical interest, when thus surrounded by memorials of many romantic incidents in the national history. To Mr Granville, all the charms of the place and season seemed familiar. He pointed out to Marion a thousand beauties overlooked by ordinary eyes, while many a refined allusion to his own attachment arose spontaneously out of the subject, and was listened to by her with modest but heartfelt interest. They conversed with glowing delight and perfect communion of thought, on the various interesting subjects which abound in the rich stores of a cultivated mind. Throughout the remarks of Mr Granville on music, science, and every elevating enjoyment of the human intellect, the poetry of literature, as well as

the poetry of nature might be traced. Even the most indifferent subjects were no longer indifferent to Richard and Marion when thus viewed with mutual interest, and when affording a deeper insight into each other's heart and mind; while the gorgeous scenery around inspired them with feelings of enjoyment beyond any that could be attained in gaudy festivity and artificial amusement.

"This place is quite a morsel of Arcadia!" exclaimed Marion, while her eyes were beaming with delight. "I could fancy it some undiscovered country of our own, with not a living being in it but ourselves."

"Excuse me there," said Sir Arthur, smiling. "I shall by no means vote for having my world made so small and select! I am the most sociable of created beings, having fully convinced myself that nothing renders people more utterly selfish than solitude; all your strollings alone in forests and reclining beside rivers, what do they lead to? a prodigious opinion of ourselves, and an extreme indifference or contempt for others!"

"Most undeniably true," replied Mr Gran-

ville. "If we had no happiness to seek but our own, I should not have far to search for mine; yet, as a matter of duty, I am for association and for cultivating the kinder feeling produced by mingling with others. Man could not be happy alone, even in Paradise, and the sternest misanthropes can do nothing worse against society than to become solitary hermits."

"The injury is inflicted on themselves also, as Providence has ordained for wise purposes that, bad as men are, they should love one another," observed Sir Arthur. "My Marion here brings the joy of spring to cheer the winter of my life, and I give her in return the gathered experience of many a long year; while, with you both beside me, the withering leaves of autumn look almost green and almost gay."

"Yet this is certainly the most melancholy of all seasons," replied Mr Granville. "It has been called the time of fulfilment, when hope is realized,—but it can be an emblem only of Christian hope realized in death. Every hue and every sound reminds me of

decay. The howling winds, the fleeting clouds, and the rustling leaves all speak of change and mortality; but permanent hopes and feelings belong only to our religion, which become the charm of existence when they arise, and which neither time nor death can alter. Our earthly affections when founded on such ennobling prospects, entitle us to believe that we shall advance, hand in hand with those we love, along the journey of life, and even at the end, be only separated for a very short period, to be reunited in a world of which even hours so bright as these are but a faint representation. When a Christian dies, he dies into another world. He is then born into a scene more beautiful, more joyous, and more lasting than this."

"How surprising it seems, that so little real admiration is felt for the wonders of nature, though so much is pretended!" observed Marion. "If anything could vulgarize so glorious a scene, it would be that tawdry crowd of many-coloured visitors, rending the air with exclamations of delight, which seem chiefly addressed to the crows and jackdaws."

"We should have a band of fairies here, to give suitable music," added Sir Arthur; "and you ought to rob the poets of a few verses to celebrate the shades of Studley. I observe, Marion, that though in actual conversation, a single line of poetry sounds pedantic, yet young ladies in all novels have the whole British poets by heart, and spout entire pages by the yard measure, for every emergency, taken from Cowper, Milton, Byron, and Co."

An interesting discussion now ensued, respecting the effect produced on the mind by sacred poetry, which diverged to the subject of sacred music, when Mr Granville spoke with enthusiasm of the exalting, touching, and saddening influence of Handel's choruses, and of the affecting thoughts they occasionally create. In every remark referring to the heart or imagination, he expressed himself with a depth and fervour, felt and appreciated by the fresh young mind of Marion, who now experienced under the happiest auspices, how much the mental faculties are enlivened by studying nature. Amidst surrounding peace, the soul exercises its bright-

est powers of thought, undivided by the shifting scenes of human life, with its thousand fluctuating objects and cares; while the fancy, liberated and unoccupied, is thrown back upon itself, and discovers once more the visions of other days, the stores of memory, experience, and hope.

From the point of view to which their guide now led the party, all the finest characteristics of Fountain Abbey became visible, and Marion found Miss Smythe finishing a masterly sketch of the landscape, which she blushingly yielded up for examination, while Sir Patrick confessed that he had been standing in his most picturesque attitude during five minutes, in hopes of obtaining a place in the foreground. Nothing could be more strikingly beautiful than her spirited representation of the large eastern window, like a light triumphal arch, the patches of ivy clinging round those mouldering walls, and the high stately tower, nearly transparent with its many windows, all yet in perfect preservation.

"What a fatigue!" exclaimed Sir Patrick,

throwing himself in a graceful attitude full-length on the sloping turf. "This day is like the famous Peter Schlemihl, without any shadow!"

"Well done art and nature both!" added Captain De Crespigny; "we have not existed in vain after seeing that matchless view! I shall give bail to live contented and happy during the rest of my life, if you will only endow me with all I see, and let it be shared with the person in this company whom I like best, though perhaps she might tire of me!"

Agnes bit her scarlet lip with scorn at words which would once have thrilled to her very heart, but she turned away with an insufferably haughty air on perceiving that her *ci-devant* admirer had turned his most irresistible looks towards Marion, who was earnestly talking in an undertone to Miss Smythe, while a look of anxious alarm had become depicted on the countenances of both.

"Such moments as these are like the colours of a rainbow, very bright and very fleeting;" observed Sir Arthur. "If I had a place magnificent as this, even with the power of

choosing my own society, yet, as Dr Johnson observes, 'such possessions make men unwilling to die!'"

"Allow me to differ then, from Dr Johnson," replied Mr Granville. "It is not our possessions, but our affections that could ever make me grieve to forsake this bright green earth. I would rather be loved by one than envied by thousands. I can imagine no happiness that does not spring from the heart, and the most splendid mansion that ever adorned the earth, would be a desert without the smile of those who loved me to welcome my entrance there."

"Who that knows the worth of friendship would not say the same," added Marion in a deep low tone. "My wishes never grasp at great possessions, as their very vastness appears disproportioned to our nature and powers. The most superb houses are those most generally deserted by their owners, but I scarcely ever see a retired and peaceful cottage without whispering to myself, 'There I could be happy.'"

"Take my word for it, the whole thing

would be odious in a week," said Captain De Crespigny. "I have been a great observer of life from the windows of the New Club, and my serious opinion is, that poetry is all written to mislead our unsuspecting youth into an effervescence of empty enthusiasm about rural felicity on an income of nothing per annum; but I drew the cork out of that bottle long ago, and found it all froth. Once upon a time I was betrayed into living a month at one of those little bird's nests, a gaudy stuccoed gimcrack, all plaster and green paint, surrounded with roses, holly-hocks, and the flaring trash people call flowers; there were within the walls three noisy dogs, four ditto children, a roasting-jack, and a mangle, all screeching at once! It was distracting! No! no! I hate money myself, but that cured me of ever making a mere bread-and-butter match."

"Yet I could live on the bread without the butter, for any one I really liked, or even the butter without the bread;" said Mr Granville, smiling. "Money is only the raw material of enjoyment, which must be raised into a fabric of solid strength, and embellished

with taste to suit my wishes and hopes. The hook and eye will never be of gold that attaches me, and nothing has ever been so difficult to my comprehension as that any one can possibly form the nearest ties of life upon a mere calculation of profit and loss!"

"Well!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, who always assumed an air of bravado before Mr Granville, to conceal his real feelings; "I am above all the follies of inferior mortals, but I do say that to me, the most interesting object in nature is a young lady of large independent fortune, ready to throw herself away on the first man who asks her!"

At this moment Miss Smythe's sketch-book fell to the ground, while with a sudden exclamation of affright she started up, but instantly endeavoured to recover herself, and when Sir Patrick had gathered up her pencils she received them back with a blush of double-dyed carnation, as if she could never unblush again, and making an apology for having been startled by the sudden apparition of a hare, she silently resumed her occupation, and Sir

Patrick continued to rattle on at his full pitch of nonsense, as if nothing had occurred.

"I wonder Lady Sarah Marchmont did not wait another season for me! I was hastening rapidly to my last shilling, and might possibly have been driven, by stress of weather, to propose, if she had not accepted the Duke of Middlesex in despair; yet had she possessed a thousand pounds for every shilling, I am not certain that the most golden of her gold could have gilded her." ——

"My dear fellow!" interrupted Captain De Crespigny, in his most sagacious tone, "*L'amour fait beaucoup, mais l'argent fait tout;* it is easy to say 'fortune,' but where will you ever find one to weigh in the scale against Lady Sarah?"

"Easily, any day! As the Spaniards say, 'a man of straw is worth a woman of gold.' Last season in London all the heiresses were dying for me."

"Except three who never saw you."

"And at balls, when a chaperon asked any young lady who she would prefer for a part-

ner, the invariable answer was, in the sweetest voice imaginable, 'Sir Patrick Dunbar!'"

"Or the Duke of Tunbridge, and he never dances!"

"Indeed, next season I have serious thoughts of lending myself out to parties at so much an hour. It is all nonsense about fortune being blind! The goddess has one eye left, which has been fixed upon me during the last five years, if I would only accept her favours."

"Well, Dunbar! We all know that you are like the elephant in an Irish menagerie, who was the greatest elephant in the world except himself. But be warned in time! They say every man has one opportunity given him of succeeding in life, and if he lose that, he never has a second! Positively, old fellow, now is your time! Do not think me malicious, but even I, your best friend, must allow that you are growing fat."

"Yes!" observed Agnes, in the same rallying tone. "Pat is scarcely such a 'look-and-die' person as he was. I remember him younger once!"

"Very true! I am getting quite uneasy about you," added Captain De Crespigny, in an admonitory voice. "A young lady's reign lasts from seventeen till twenty, and our best days are over at forty! Dunbar, shall I give you a line of recommendation to Miss Howard?"

"A million of thanks, but as you never succeeded in recommending yourself, De Crespigny, I shall be better, in case of extremity, standing on my own merits."

"Then you will stand as precariously as my old uncle Doncaster, toiling up the bank there, whose legs look so thin, that I often wonder he has courage to venture upon them at all. He is most unfit to come up hill, when actually going down the hill of life so very fast, that he might as well be setting his worldly affairs in order."

"Worldly affairs! He has no other affairs, I suppose," replied Agnes, with a supercilious smile on her haughty lip. "And I think Lord Doncaster will be able to manage his own for many years to come! He intends to live as long as Great Britain

is an island! Nobody is old till he feels old."

Captain De Crespigny looked at Agnes with a penetrating air of astonishment, which gradually changed to an expression of satirical indifference, while he added, "This is an odd world, Miss Dunbar!"

"So it is! when did that idea first occur to you! It seems so very new!" replied Agnes, in a tone of biting satire. "Patrick has often told me, that the De Crespignys are reckoned a sagacious family, and perhaps after so bright a remark, you may turn out by no means the sort of every-day person people expected."

"Probably not! I shall perhaps be like Cimon awakened from stupidity by the charms of a second Iphigenia," said Captain De Crespigny, with an air as if he had surpassed himself; but the smile with which Agnes listened to this characteristic reply, was cold and transient as a gleam of sunshine on a frozen lake; yet while her features remained immoveable as those of a beautiful statue, a strange unnatural fire sparkled in her splen-

did eyes, and with a look of withering indignation, she turned haughtily away to address Lord Doncaster, while Captain De Crespigny, humming the last opera tune, and switching with his cane the heads off all the flowers along his path, quickened his pace, and resumed his not very welcome assiduities to Marion, who felt insufferably annoyed at being obliged always to hear the same nonsense talked, and to play her part in what she considered a mere hack flirtation on the part of Captain De Crespigny, while she greatly wondered that he had not long since tired of always in her company, drawing up an empty bucket.

Sir Patrick was preparing to follow, when he observed the young sketcher hastily adding a last touch to her beautiful drawing, and before she could assemble all her scattered implements and materials, which he assisted her to do, the whole joyous party had nearly vanished out of sight, while the young Baronet's eyes flashed with amazement on giving a clandestine glance into the sketch-book, to find there an extremely clever caricature of

Captain De Crespigny, as he had stood a few minutes before, endeavouring to divide his attentions among the whole group of ladies. On examining another leaf, he found, to his yet greater surprise, a beautiful likeness of Clara Granville, and turning instantly to his young companion with sudden emotion, he entreated permission to have it copied. While he was yet speaking, the young lady, with crimsoned cheeks, though a lurking smile played about her mouth, continued hastily to follow the guide, tracing his footsteps with an accuracy worthy of a Mohican, impatient evidently to overtake their companions as she hastily threaded her way through the forest glades, and beneath the arching branches of many a lofty tree, towards a dark gloomy-looking plantation, to which their guide seemed now impatiently hurrying them. He was dressed in a smock frock, and had become singularly silent, his replies being all so short and so grudgingly given, that Sir Patrick had angrily yielded up the point, determined to give the man nothing, and not to ask him another question, when suddenly his

arm was tremblingly grasped by the young lady beside him, while in a low strange unearthly whisper, and with a look of mortal terror, she said, "I do not like this! What can it mean? Has he escaped from confinement? Are you sure that man is our guide?"

"I scarcely looked, but of course he is! It can be no one else!" replied Sir Patrick, in a soothing tone, for he thought she must certainly be deranged. "There he waits for us! We shall overtake our friends immediately."

"Look at this tree! pretend to be admiring the landscape," continued the young lady, in a deep concentrated voice; "but tell me,—can we make our escape unobserved by that man. My life probably depends upon your answer!"

Sir Patrick now became confirmed in his opinion respecting the insanity of his young companion, and fixing his eyes on her countenance, he perceived with amazement that every tinge of colour had been drained from her cheek,—that her lip quivered with af-

fright,—and that terror spoke in her eyes, and trembled in every limb, while her words poured out with a rushing vehemence of tone and manner, which startled and alarmed him.

"I caught a momentary glance of his countenance! where could I ever see these eyes and be mistaken! there is madness yet in their expression. He has sworn to destroy me. The whole purpose of his being is revenge!"

"Revenge on you! impossible! Who could be so unmanly,—so ——"

"You forget that my cousin is insane!—that he thinks I drove him into madness!—that he pursued me day and night till we shut him up! Can nothing be done?"

"Miss Howard!! I might have guessed this! Can it be? When I am here, you need apprehend nothing! He dare not harm you."

"Oh! how little you know him! In his present state, he has the strength of ten men," replied she, with wild and hurried glances. "Once I saw him struggle in their

grasp! Why must I for ever remember that scene? His cries! his imprecations; but see! he returns! Let us appear still to advance, but concert some plan for my escape, or believe me, my moments are numbered."

The tone of intense agony in which these words were uttered, filled Sir Patrick with pity, while knowing the fearful and mysterious power communicated by madness, even to the feeblest frame, he felt a well-grounded apprehension for the terrified girl's safety, on observing the strong muscular figure of the maniac; therefore, after walking on some steps, he whispered to her, almost inaudibly,

"The guide seldom looks back. Let me ask him a question, and immediately afterwards drop down the side of this hill, and conceal yourself. I shall continue to follow him, that the sound of your footsteps may not be missed. Whatever the danger is, be firm, and you will certainly escape. Guide!" continued he, elevating his voice in an authoritative tone, yet, even at this crisis, unable to resist a joke; "tell me the exact age of this

tree, and how many stones it took to build the Abbey?"

The man threw back some inaudible reply in a surly dogged voice, and quickened his pace towards a dark group of fir-trees, while again the almost fainting girl gave an agitated glance at Sir Patrick, who silently pointed towards the turf edging along the gravel-walk, making her a sign to take flight upon it as noiselessly as possible, while he proceeded forward himself with no fairy tread, making the sound of his footsteps as loud as if there had still been two behind.

After the terrified girl had hastily slid down a steep bank, and disappeared amidst a mass of evergreens, Sir Patrick was beginning to contemplate the expediency of adopting a similar plan, seeing that in conflict with a madman he could gain neither honour nor advantage, and might be seriously injured, when the maniac suddenly burst into a thrilling fearful laugh, and, snatching a pistol from his breast, turned fiercely round, when Sir Patrick instantly recognized, as he had begun to expect, the countenance of that excited

stranger, whom Captain De Crespigny had in the morning named to him as Ernest Anstruther.

Astonishment and unimaginable fury glittered in the madman's wild and haggard countenance, when he missed the object of his pursuit, and he looked for the moment like a wild beast at bay, till, springing upon Sir Patrick with a cry of hideous rage, he seized hold of his arm with a delirious grasp, and clenched his fist, shouting in accents of frenzied rage, while the white foam was on his lips,

"Where! where is she! Tell me, or you shall die! Have I tracked her through earth and air, through sky and ocean, to be disappointed now! With sleepless care I have dodged her steps! Demons drove me on! Fiends and serpents have beset me! Coals of fire were on my brain! Cold hands are on my heart! All is horror! Every human soul shall shudder for the deeds I do! A brand of shame shall be on my head. The dogs shall howl when I pass! Even now, the sun never shines on me! Show me, then,

where she is, or I will tear you limb from limb."

Sir Patrick stood firm as a rock, before this whirlwind of passion, though filled with horrible amazement, as he beheld the burning glare of the madman's eye, and heard the sharp, shrill, shrieking voice in which he spoke; but if he appeared terrible in his fierce excitement, he seemed more terrible still, when a moment afterwards, with a cold, livid look, as if turned into stone, he added,

"She shall be mine, or she shall never be given to another. I would not spare her for ten thousand lives. If she refuse me, her lips shall be closed for ever and ever. I shall destroy and be destroyed. My love or my vengeance must be gratified; and mark my words. You are the friend of Louis De Crespigny. I would it had been himself, and one of us should never have left this spot alive. There is a dark and dreary account to be settled between him and me. My first warning shall be my last," added he, in a hollow whisper, while a look of dangerous meaning gleamed in his eye. "He deserves death at my

hands. He wrenched my sister from her home, trampled on her affections, and is born in all things to injure and supplant me! He must die!" added the maniac, with a strange glare in his eye-balls. "It is perhaps for his sake that I am rejected! Wild voices are whispering in my ear! Unnameable horrors beset me! Fierce phantoms are hissing and shouting behind me!"

The unfortunate being uttered these words with preternatural fury, while his countenance wore an expression of deadly malignity. He then paused, ground his teeth, and with the frightful levity of a maniac, uttering a howling, fiendish laugh, and rushing away, disappeared into the thickest part of the forest, leaving Sir Patrick horror-struck at the awful spectacle of a shattered intellect, the fragments of which were of so deadly a nature; while at the same time, amidst a torrent of other thoughts and feelings, chiefly directed to secure the safety of Captain De Crespigny, he could not but smile at his present discovery, that the plainly-dressed, shy, reserved, but rather satirical young lady whom he had

been of late patronizing and bringing forward, was no other than the superbly-endowed heiress, Miss Howard Smytheson, respecting whom he had so often rallied himself.

CHAPTER VII.

HAMLET. —— I did love thee once:
OPHELIA. Indeed, my Lord, you made me believe so.

SIR PATRICK gave instant information to the civil authorities at Harrowgate, respecting the dangerous madman now in the neighbourhood; and when every particular of his adventure had reached Agnes, she felt an undefined sensation of disappointment that the end had not been of a more exciting nature. Never happy unless her mind were in a complete foam of excitement, she lived for sensation, and would have bought it at any price, being heard often to complain, that now nothing ever happened. Every day she considered as a chapter in her own life, into which

she wished as many incidents crowded as possible, caring little whether joy or sorrow prevailed among those around, if the weary vacuum in her thoughts were but filled up. A few elopements or murders made a newspaper extremely acceptable; while even public riots she would have allowed to a certain pitch, provided she could pull the check-string as soon as they became at all inconvenient or alarming to herself; while she often remarked in a querulous tone, that a revolution had been a thing threatened and talked of all her life, without ever seeming any nearer. The world, in short, if arranged to suit her taste, would have been one shifting scene of accidents and offences, fires, overturns, explosions, narrow escapes, marriages, births, deaths, mournful catastrophes, and astonishing vicissitudes.

On the evening after the pic-nic at Studley, Sir Arthur having gone early to bed, at his lodgings near the Granby, Marion accompanied her sister and Mrs O'Donoghoe, to fulfil a dinner engagement at the Crown Hotel; and on their way home, the lively widow ral-

lied Agnes on her prospect of walking at the next coronation, saying, that Lord Doncaster had evidently laid down twenty years of his life lately; and that she had once seen the Doncaster diamonds, then considered the finest family jewels in Britain, which Queen Charlotte herself was supposed to have coveted, and the box containing which required two footmen to carry it.

"The tiara would shine like glow worms in your dark hair, and the bandeau round your waist would be exquisite! I have heard it remarked, that people in this perverse world will not be happy; that those who have every wish gratified, and not a want upon earth, invent a grievance for themselves, and live upon it; but I wonder where the Marchioness of Doncaster could find one. You might drive away care in that beautiful pony carriage, kill time with your grand pianoforte, and read your own happiness in the envy of every one around. Even your sister seems scarcely so happy at your good fortune as might have been expected!"

"There is no earthly blessing I do not

with my whole heart desire for Agnes," replied Marion warmly, when thus appealed to. "But if she has any plans such as you speak of, let no one ask me what I think, as it is quite enough that she should herself know my utter abhorrence of them."

Tears of indignant sorrow sprang into Marion's eyes, and she gazed earnestly out of the window, trying to conceal and to conquer her emotion, while Mrs O'Donoghoe exclaimed, in a tone of satirical burlesque,

> "For of the choice, what heart can doubt,
> Of tents with love, or thrones without!"

As their carriage drove on, the night being clear and moon-lit, the wind sweeping over the earth with a rushing sound, and ten thousand stars twinkling in the blue vault above, Agnes remarked, in accents of surprise, that crowds of people were running eagerly on the road, with animated looks, and an appearance of most unusual excitement. Soon after she heard a rumbling noise behind, as of some heavy vehicle hurtling and thundering along the road; and the next moment a fire-engine

passed at full speed, amidst the cheers and vociferations of a dense multitude, who assisted and followed its progress, with looks of mingled curiosity, delight, and apprehension.

Marion hastily thrust her head far out of the carriage, and perceived that a lurid glare burned on the sky, evidently reflected from High Harrowgate, while bright spiral flames shot upwards into the flaming arch above, and burning flakes of fire descended in showers of terrifying brilliancy. Every now and then a fresh burst of dazzling light blazed to the very heavens, while Marion watched the flickering flames with intense and solemn interest; but Agnes, after the first surprise was over, sank lazily back into the carriage, saying, with a look of peevish disappointment,

"It is only a fire somewhere! Fires are so common now, that they excite scarcely any sensation! One might fancy, Marion, that you had a valuable uninsured house at High Harrowgate!"

"It looks, even at this distance, very awful!" replied Marion. "The hills are like

molten fire, while the broad red reflection on those massy clouds makes the very heavens seem on fire! What gleams of fiery light! What sheets of flame! It is fearfully grand! We should pray, Agnes, that no lives may be lost!"

"Fires are never fatal now! Years ago they were said to be sometimes really frightful; but now any one I ever saw might be extinguished with a tea-cup. I never so much as read the accounts of one in the newspapers. We shall of course be asked to subscribe for the sufferers," added Agnes, in a tone of contemptuous pity, "poor creatures!"

"What a strange look of terrified enjoyment is depicted on the countenances of all who hurry past!" exclaimed Marion. "It is curious, that probably some of those people who are ready to risk their lives in extinguishing the flames, would yet feel quite disappointed and ill-treated on arriving, to find that there was actually no conflagration. There are no limits to the love of excitement. When people have made up their great minds to a catastrophe, they feel really cheated if

it does not occur; and I often think, that old people especially wish their few remaining days to be crowded with events, like the last pages in a novel."

The noise and the mob had greatly increased: loud shouts, hoarse yells, and clamorous cries of fire resounded on every side, with the heavy trampling of a hundred feet, when suddenly Sir Arthur's coachman whipped the horses violently, and proceeded forward with unprecedented rapidity, till Marion fancied the horses must have taken fright at the ignited sparks, which were now borne along in the air, and that maddened with terror, they were actually running off.

Agnes, now really in a state of excitement, thrust her head again out of the window, believing that the coachman must be drunk, and that a catastrophe, though not exactly what she would have selected, might actually occur, and Marion continued anxiously gazing around, till gradually a horrid sensation of doubt and fear gathered upon her mind, as she looked in the direction from which the

light came. The curtain of night was withdrawn—the surrounding scene seemed one mighty furnace—and the roaring noise of the flames was now distinctly audible. At a turn of the road the whole became distinctly visible; and Marion, suddenly uttering a wild cry of horror and amazement, covered her face with her hands, and sank back, almost fainting, in the carriage; for she had at once become aware that the fire must be among the houses where Sir Arthur lodged. The garden around them was one vivid blaze of burning light—the stems of the trees were visible in dark relief, on a drapery of fire—while a brilliant pillar of flame, like a gigantic serpent, twirled its enormous coils upwards into the very sky. Forked flames appeared bursting from every window, and sweeping over the whole house, which was one great reservoir of fire, while a black volume of smoke rolled far away to the distant horizon.

"Is there no mistake?" exclaimed Marion, wringing her hands with terror, and bending her head almost to her knees in unendurable grief. "Is there no hope? Tell John to

drive on faster—faster! O let me out—let me fly to the house! This is dreadful! fearful! Shall we never reach the spot! Listen to their cries! Let me out! let me out!"

"Dear Marion! there are crowds giving assistance! He must have escaped," said Agnes, in trembling accents. "I feel certain he has escaped. He surely heard the noise, and called for help!"

A dense mass of persons round the crashing house, wild with agitation, and vehement in their attitudes and gestures, prevented the carriage from advancing farther; but Marion instantly opened the door, sprang out, and with an impetuosity which nothing could resist, rushed onwards. She was not one whose faculties could be prostrated by terror or danger; for it was then that her quick judgment and generous spirit became most active; and while crowds were standing around, in vacant helpless wonder, she reached the spot where a tottering ladder had been placed against the walls, and where the engines were playing upon the blazing roofs, while flames spouted forth in every direction,

and a confused din of cries and vociferous oaths became audible on every side.

Timid and easily frightened on slight occasions, all emotion now appeared to be dead within the breast of Marion, who paused, while, with bloodless cheek, and a face as rigid as death, she seemed turned into stone; yet every word whispered around fell with frightful distinctness on her ear.

"The last house that caught fire is uninhabited, I believe?" asked a stranger, calmly. "I am informed that the whole conflagration was raised by a madman—a perfect Guy Fawkes, who afterwards escaped. There are crowds of servants belonging to the heiress Miss Howard, and he had some scheme of carrying her off; but most mercifully she and her attendants were all saved."

"Very fortunate indeed, as the stair-case is now falling in," added another, while crash followed crash in frightful succession. "Some one talked of a blind gentleman being there, but that is probably a picturesque addition, to give the story interest, for that tall house seems really empty."

At this moment a low murmur of grief and horror arose among the crowd, followed by a death-like silence. In a part of the building high above what had yet been consumed by the flames, though already undermined, the shutters of a window were slowly opened, the sash hastily thrown open, and the venerable figure of Sir Arthur appeared there, his grey hair streaming in the wind, and his head stretched forward in the act of listening. He raised his hand to his forehead, as if bewildered, and seemed evidently calling for help; but his feeble voice was lost amid the war of elements, the crackling and blazing of all around, and the loud crash of falling timber.

No one had a hope of his being rescued, and the most selfishly indifferent looked on with breathless dismay, while Agnes threw herself on the grass in an agony of horror and despair; but Marion rapidly grasped her hand with convulsive energy, saying, in a low deep whisper, "I shall save him, or die with him."

Using the speed of thought she flew forward, while every voice was raised in loud

shouts to stop her; and several persons, as soon as they became aware of Marion's rash intentions, followed vehemently in pursuit, determined to force her back; but eluding their grasp, she wrapped her large cloak around her, and ascended the crackling beams of the stair-case, beneath a shower of glowing sparks, while blazing flames were running round the cornices and ceiling with a sound like incessant thunder.

The smoke nearly blinded her—the smell of burning wood became suffocating—and the heat was nearly unbearable. Long wreaths of fire and smoke soon shut Marion out from the view of those who followed, and none could pursue with their eyes the fearful progress of her enterprise, while she hurried onwards, having one only thought in her heart, that Sir Arthur, blind and alone, was calling for help, and might yet perhaps be saved. A wooden gallery, leading from the stair to Sir Arthur's room, though fringed with an intense and devouring flame, which had almost entirely burned it away, shewed yet a plank remaining close to the wall, charred and

blackened, while shrivelling and crackling in the devouring element. Over this Marion quickly but cautiously glided; and opening the Admiral's door, she tried to compose her voice, saying in a clear distinct tone,

"I am here, uncle Arthur! come away quickly! give me your hand!"

"What is the matter, Marion? What is all this?" replied he, turning round with a quivering lip, and in a tone of piercing agitation. "The blessing of your blind and helpless uncle be upon you! I am so agitated and confused! Where is the fire? Every body had forgotten me but you!"

"Uncle Arthur!" answered Marion, hurrying with him towards the door, where they were almost suffocated by a dense cloud of dust and smoke; "you were always brave and determined. All our courage is necessary now. Be firm and we may escape. You are now at the door. This wooden gallery is nearly burned away. It could not sustain us both, and no earthly power shall persuade me to go first. You can only impede me by speaking of it. Lose not a moment, then,

for that will but increase our danger. Cling close to the wall; feel it all the way. I shall call out when you are safely over. Then remember the fifty steps we always counted to the first landing-place. After that turn to the right, and you are safe. May the Almighty protect and guide you!"

"But Marion! my dear child! you are coming this way too?"

"Yes! or perhaps some other!" said she, assuming a tone of indifference, while she despondingly gazed at the rapidly consuming beam, and the thick smoke, which arose like mist before her sight. "Go on, dear uncle, and pray for yourself and me."

Marion led Sir Arthur to the very brink of the yawning gulf, and cautiously placed him on the tottering gallery, deaf to his entreaties that she would seek her own safety first, and imploring him not to render her enterprise unavailing by delay. Flames were leaping upwards in the dark abyss beneath, dust and mortar fell in clouds on every side, while the heat and noise of the flashing light became more and more terrific; but still she spoke

calmly to him, in tones of confidence and encouragement, giving directions while he remained in sight, and anxiously watching, as he slowly and cautiously groped his way. All Sir Arthur's firmness of look and voice had now returned, as he questioned or thanked her, when suddenly a deafening crash took place over head, an impending fragment of the roof was precipitated with a roaring convulsion upon the spot where a moment before the Admiral had stood, and nothing now remained beneath the eye of Marion but a hideous gulf of smoke and ruins, one bewildering medley of crackling beams and falling floors, a mighty mass of horror, which it made her giddy to behold.

Marion ceased now to speak, fearful that her voice might induce Sir Arthur, if yet alive, to return; and nearly hopeless of his having escaped, she now felt that no duty was so imperative, as, if possible, to seek her own safety. Yet what resource remained? Her heart beat hurriedly, stopped and beat again, while a choking sensation arose in her throat, when for the first time she fully con-

templated her own instant danger. The noise was like that of a mighty wind, while the flames swept the very heavens, with a sound more appalling than the loudest thunder, and she hurried almost breathlessly back to Sir Arthur's apartment, which had not yet been attacked by the devouring element.

The heat was even there so intense, that she hastened to a window for air, and a shud dering groan burst from the surrounding multitude when they beheld her; but no succour was near, while the door became instantly blockaded by shivered beams and smouldering ruins, which had fallen at the entrance, setting it on fire, and she saw around long aisles of flame, and deep caverns filled with surges of fire and smoke.

Marion felt now that death impended in its most terrifying form. It was no new thing with her to prepare for the certain approach of dissolution; yet often as she had tried to realize the idea of that mighty change, never did it appear before with the appalling distinctness, which now filled her spirit with unutterable awe, while standing as it were be-

tween earth and heaven, all beneath full of boundless terror, but all above promising peace, and full of hope.

No effort of her own could avail. Marion looked at the long line of tall houses on her left, untouched by the flames. She glanced at the crowd below, all anxiously gazing upwards, in death-like stillness, and at the garden, which seemed paved with faces; but while the consuming flames pursued their desolating track, not a hope of rescue appeared. A storm of burning ashes fell on every side, and all around was a whirlwind of fire and smoke.

Marion's figure became conspicuously seen at the window, every pane of which was already so heated by the blazing conflagration behind, that she leaned against the shutters, and gazed towards heaven, as if already lost to all connection with the world around.

"Martyrs have willingly died in a scene like this," thought she. "Let me also testify the faith in which I die."

Marion clasped her hands, while now her spirit rose superior to danger, and, seeing the

hundreds gazing at her in silent, horror-struck sympathy, she calmly pointed upwards, that all might remember the comfort derived from a hope full of immortality.

The heat had become so intense, that Marion, choked almost to suffocation, leaned farther than ever out of the window, trying to catch one breath of air, when to her astonishment she now perceived the figure of a man descending from the window of a house far to the left, and having planted his foot on a narrow ledge of stone, which ran along all the buildings as an architectural ornament, he pressed his hands firmly against the wall, to preserve his balance, and, with a degree of skill and intrepidity scarcely to be credited, rapidly traversed that shelf towards the place where she stood, carrying one end of a rope in his hand, the other extremity of which had been already fixed to the window from which he came out.

"Marion! dear Marion!" cried the voice of Richard Granville, which even at this awful moment thrilled to her heart with deep emotion. "We must live or die together. Trust

yourself to me! Here is a firm footing. Try it! At the worst you cannot be in greater danger than now."

While yet speaking, he had securely fixed the rope to the window-frame, thus forming a temporary balustrade, and after carefully assisting her out, he slowly led Marion with one hand on the rope, and her face to the wall, safely towards a house as yet untouched by the fire.

A low whispering murmur of intense interest arose among the spectators, when they saw hopes of her being preserved, but not a voice was raised till they perceived her safe, when a deafening cheer burst from the spectators, which rang through every ear like a trumpet. Again and again it resounded, louder and louder still, but Marion heard it not, for no sooner was she out of danger, than, with a cry of thankfulness, she rushed into the expanded arms of Sir Arthur, and fainted.

When Marion recovered to consciousness, her first evidence of returning life, was the deep blush with which she extended her hand

to Mr Granville. Tears now streamed from the blinded eyes of Sir Arthur, while he spoke to her with every term of affectionate endearment, saying, in a voice that yet quivered with emotion,

"My child! my dear Marion! I thank God that your life, young and full of hope, has not been sacrificed to keep my grey hairs a few hours longer from the grave. Would that I were able to thank you as you deserve."

"Never thank me for anything, dear uncle Arthur. I owe you more than my existence, for I owe you, under Providence, all the happy days I have ever known in it, and long, long, may I be able to show you my grateful affection."

"My very dear girl, aged as I am, and shattered now, by this night's alarms, I have little more hold of life than of the gale that blows along the ocean, but existence would yet be precious to me, if I could only live to see my Marion as happy as she merits."

"Already I am!" replied Marion, affectionately embracing her uncle, while a torrent

of joyous agitated tears rushed into her eyes. "I am too happy, dear uncle Arthur! You are saved, we are restored to all we love, and my life is doubly precious to me, preserved by the generous courage of——of ——"

"Of one whose first earthly wish is to render it happy," said Mr Granville, warmly. "I trust that for many long years we shall testify together our gratitude to God for the mercies of this night."

A smile and a tear struggled hard for the mastery in Marion's downcast countenance, while Richard continued to speak with confidence and hope of the happy future, trusting that their engagement, though unavoidably postponed, could not be long delayed, and that if Clara recovered in a more favourable climate, to which she must set out the next evening, he might speedily return, to resume his duties and occupations, with new motives of hope, while Sir Arthur expressed in brief and powerful language, his fervent wish that nothing might interfere with a prospect which secured the happiness of his beloved Marion.

"Yet," observed Sir Arthur, next morning, when Mr Granville called to take leave, "I dislike long engagements, and never would recommend one. If you both remain constant, it is unnecessary, and if either of you change, it would be little worth to obtain from a sense of honour what should only spring from affection.

"There is nothing to fear on that score," replied Mr Granville, exchanging a smile with Marion. "We are most apt in general to doubt where we have most at stake, but I have lately become almost presumptuously confident. I would not wish, Sir Arthur, that Marion should feel engaged one hour after she ceased to love me more than she could love any other, or if there were any man on earth who could value her more, and make her happier. One thing I ask of you, dear Marion, and only one," added he, his eyes flashing with animation;—"That till we meet again, nothing shall make you doubt my unalterable affection; and in asking this, I ask only what I intend in return towards you, that our mutual confidence may

be for ever unbroken from the first hour we met."

"To trust you once is to trust you for ever," answered she, in a low, scarcely audible voice. "All my happiness in life depends on one, who, I am certain, never will change."

"Then, as surely as day follows night, I hope our present parting shall be followed by a happy re-union; and months will seem like hours, till I return to claim you as my own, till I once more hear your voice, and till this hand is again clasped in mine."

Marion listened with a quivering smile on her lip, while a tear trembled in her eye. For a moment the blood forsook her cheek, and returned again in rushing torrents over her whole countenance, while the eloquence of the heart was in her eyes, though she attempted not to reply; and Mr Granville continued, in accents of the deepest tenderness,

"It grieves me more and more every day to think of leaving you, but my duty to Clara must not be postponed any longer. Her strength is gradually diminishing, and though she does not idly or selfishly indulge her feel-

ings, yet here, above all places, she seems least likely to forget a sorrow, which is, I trust, not incurable. We, who are Christians, know that there is some good purpose in her affliction, and that the lightest straw which casts its balance into our lot, is ordained by the infinite power, and the infinite goodness of One who cannot err."

"Yes!" replied Marion. "In going through life, I feel myself reading a book by the best of all authors. Many of the incidents, as we advance, surprise and disappoint us; but, knowing that the whole is on a plan which could not be improved, we feel certain that all shall turn out right and best in the end."

"It is a conviction such as you describe, Marion, which allays the torturing and almost feverish anxiety I should otherwise suffer respecting those around whom my warmest affections are kindled," observed Mr Granville. "Religion is indeed the best of all anodynes for pain of every kind; otherwise, who can tell how greatly I should have suffered in our sorrowful uncertainty respecting Clara's recovery, and in leaving you, my Marion, to whom I am

now bound by every tie that can unite heart to heart. I will not—I cannot say, farewell; but let us live in hope of better days to come."

Mr Granville at length took leave; and, as he hurried for the last time across the common, Marion leaned against the window, and followed him with her eyes till he vanished out of sight; while Sir Arthur's countenance shewed that his kind heart was full of anxiety and sorrow; for he had seen many vicissitudes in human life and human attachment, therefore he trembled for the possibility of sorrow hereafter to one whom he loved with all the unbounded warmth of his nature.

Marion closed her eyes that night with the pleasing conviction, that the world contained not a happier being than herself. She felt conscious how much Mr Granville had elevated her mind by his conversation, what a treasure of interesting thoughts and pleasing hopes he had left her; and, while following him in imagination through every mile of his journey, and sadly counting the many days that must intervene till they could meet again, she resolutely turned her mind towards all the pur-

suits and occupations calculated to render her worthy of Richard Granville, when he returned to claim her as the partner and companion of his future existence.

"Discerning mortal! do thou serve the will
Of Time's Eternal Master, and that peace
Which the world wants, shall be to thee confirm'd."

CHAPTER VIII.

"———————————— Marry, Sir!
Marry to-day! the sooner, Sir, the better,
And may you find you have made a bargain, Sir;
As for the lady! much I wish her joy.
I pray you, send me no bride-cake, Sir!
Nor gloves;—if you do, I'll give them to my maid,
Or throw them into the kennel—or the fire.
I am your most obedient servant, Sir!

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

CAPTAIN De Crespigny had heard with frantic alarm of the fearful danger from which Marion was so wonderfully delivered; and then, for the first time, he discovered the whole depth and reality of his love. The gracefulness of every thought which she expressed, and the bright beauty of that look with which it was accompanied, had made an indelible impression on his heart, so that now, when he saw

her so unexpectedly snatched from the jaws of death, no words could do justice to his emotion. He hurried that very evening to ascertain the reality of her escape, and to say what he could on the occasion; while the tremulousness of his voice, and the quivering of his lip, gave a degree of depth and reality to his few incoherent sentences, which all his well-turned speeches in former times had failed to convey. Marion thanked him warmly for his friendly sympathy, and spoke to him with all the intimacy of relationship and old acquaintance; but when she turned to Mr Granville, Captain De Crespigny then observed the flutter of her voice, the deep tone of tenderness, and the look full of confidence and full of interest, with which she spoke to him, and to him only; while there was a degree of tact and delicacy in her manner of testifying the wide disparity of her feelings, which left him nothing of which to complain. Careless of the dry and sarcastic air with which Agnes watched his mortification, Captain De Crespigny did not even take the trouble to conceal it; but soon after strode out of the room, and walked with hurried and

agitated steps, up and down in the garden, whistling, but not from want of thought. When thus alone and unobserved, a thousand angry and indignant feelings made him writhe with mental suffering, to think that he, who had been so deeply, so fatally loved by others, who had never sued in vain, and never truly had loved before, should endure now the agonies of unrequited affection, should be slighted, avoided, and forgotten, for a man he hated, as he had always hated Richard Granville.

"He cannot love her as I do!" thought Captain De Crespigny, vehemently clenching his hands, and throwing himself on a seat. "What does he know of that magical feeling! a passionless being from boyhood, master of all his own feelings and impulses, incapable of the wild ungovernable ardour which carries me forward, in the face of all obstacles, to win her! He has indeed acted manfully on this occasion, but shall the accident of his success destroy my hopes of happiness? No! it must not,—shall not be! Dunbar will never consent to their marriage, and he must prevent his sister from thus throwing herself away. She shall

yet be mine! The only girl who was ever insensible to my preference! I cannot live without her, and if there be means in the wide world to thwart Richard Granville, I must find them!"

Sir Patrick received next day, with gratified surprise, the explicit declaration of his friend's unbounded, and at length undisguised attachment for Marion, which he had already in some degree suspected, though so much accustomed to Captain De Crespigny's being in jest, that he could scarcely believe now that he was in earnest, while listening to the vehement expressions of his attachment, and promising nevertheless to enlist himself in the cause, with all the zeal and all the interest he could command.

"As her guardian, I have a perfect right to postpone this most absurd engagement, and Sir Arthur deserves to be *spifficated*, for ever having encouraged such a mere penny-wedding affair for that girl, who does not know her owu value. Agnes tells me my uncle has allowed them to correspond, but this he had no right to do, without my consent, and therefore I shall

take most effectual means to intercept every letter, either to or from her, till she is of age, after which my reign ends, though, I hope, long before that, yours shall have begun."

Sir Patrick took an early opportunity of expressing to Marion, in no measured terms, his utter abhorrence of poor marriages in general, of poor curates especially, and of Richard Granville in particular, while she, with downcast eyes, blushed, and reblushed, deeper and deeper still; though, unwilling to irritate him more than could be helped, she listened in silence, till at length, encouraged by meeting with no reply, he added, in a tone of high exhilaration,

"But we need not talk of that now! The thing does not bear speaking of! You shall hear news to-day that must positively drive all this nonsense out of your head. The best 'catch' in Britain has actually lost his heart to a tolerably pretty, and not very disagreeable young lady, by name Marion Dunbar! A better fellow does not exist on the earth than De Crespigny, and he will render you the happiest of women. I never saw any man so

anxious to make himself liked by any girl, as he is!"

Marion felt now, that she must no longer be silent, and blushing her brightest red, she replied in a low deep earnest voice, "Hear me, dear Patrick, and I shall not annoy you by saying one word in favour of my indissoluble engagement, that being a subject on which, I fear, we shall never agree; but without reference to a previous attachment, had it not even existed, my feelings towards Captain De Crespigny would have been the same. I never could confide my affection and happiness to one who has found his amusement hitherto in betraying all who trusted him, and who feeds his vanity by causing misery to those who are as deserving as myself. It would have been more merciful to destroy life, than to destroy the happiness of life, as he has done, for many, and for our own sister, I fear, among the number."

"Pshaw, Marion! Do not stand in your own light like a thief in the candle!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, impatiently. "De Crespigny is worth a hundred thousand Richard Granvilles!"

"One is all I care for!" replied Marion, timidly. "But Patrick, as you have begun the comparison, let me say, that to have once known Mr Granville is a talisman against every other attachment. There is no pleasure in life worth a thought, without mutual confidence, such, as I trust, we have established between us for ever, and such as I never could have felt with Captain De Crespigny. My taste has been tuned to a higher pitch than to be satisfied with such a transient and capricious attachment as he could ever offer to any one, mere tinsel and filligree, compared to the strong and lasting sentiment on which I may now rely."

"Marion! there is not a man living who deserves a more grateful return for his preference than De Crespigny, and I still hope the time may come, when you shall see his value, and more than return his attachment, or it will inflict a very great disappointment, which I should be annoyed beyond measure to occasion him!"

"Patrick! how could your friend, with his heart splintered into atoms, ever presume to

expect a whole one in return! He often reminds me of that German lady whose picture is drawn, encouraging three lovers at once. She is giving her hand to the first, stealing a glance at the second, and treading on the toe of the third, while each believes himself the favourite. Captain De Crespigny will take this disappointment, if it be one, to the next ball, and dance it off in a single quadrille. His love is like wax, ready for all impressions, and he has weathered so many flirtations already, that you need never be uneasy about him now. I venture to say what I think, Patrick, to convince you how vain all future importunity on the subject would be, and I cannot but observe, that if there be any blame on this occasion, it is yours, for obliging me so often most unwillingly to meet Captain De Crespigny. Let us hope, however, that you have been misled into over-estimating his intentions and feelings. Caroline Smythe sometimes takes off your friend to the very life, and I wish you could see how cleverly she carries on a furious flirtation with two ladies at once. There really seemed danger one day

that uncle Arthur would die, like the famous Mr Hope, of suppressed laughter! I wish all ladies could view the case in as ridiculous a light as Caroline does; but Patrick, it is very different in respect to Agnes. Her whole thoughts are embittered by Captain De Crespigny's unpardonable coquetry, her whole feelings lacerated, and I fear she may, in a paroxysm of angry disappointment, consign herself to long years of misery,—I may even say of degradation. You know all I mean, Patrick, and you ought, if possible, to soothe her, to advise and persuade her into a better line of conduct. As for myself, Patrick,—lastly, and to conclude," added Marion, a wandering blush resting its warm tint again on her cheek, "I can say, like Cardinal Wolsey, but with more satisfaction, 'farewell to all my greatness!' Richard is not affluent, probably he never may be so; but I am no spendthrift. I would rather have love than money, and whatever befall us, it is happiness enough for the rest of my life to know, that he thinks me deserving of his attachment. We love, and we understand each other perfectly.

Marion rushed through what she had to say with agitated rapidity, and on reaching the conclusion, she bent down her head, and leaned it on her folded arms, while Sir Patrick hastily left the room, uttering a few emphatic exclamations, which were lost in the thundering report with which he closed the drawing-room door, till it quivered upon the hinges.

"Very absurd and unaccountable!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, interrupting himself next day, during a paroxysm of angry whistling which he had carried on for some time, standing with his back to the fire, in that attitude peculiar to Englishmen, and in which he was said to be the only man who ever looked graceful. "Most extraordinary!"

"What?" asked Agnes, with a start of eager curiosity. "What is there which astonishes you so much?"

"That I am the only one of our family who cannot endure to eat roast mutton!" replied he, evidently resolved to balk her inquisitiveness. "This is a teazing and tor-

menting world, Agnes, where we cannot order everything as we like !"

" But what has ruffled the surface of your humour to-day, Pat ?" asked Agnes, indifferently. " You seldom treat me to a stage soliloquy !"

" Then, if you must have it, all I can say is this ! Here are my two best friends on earth, Wigton and De Crespigny, with a thousand mental, personal, titled, and landed recommendations, each making his proposal, and I cannot give either of them the slightest hopes !"

" Patrick ! you must be mad ! If they wait long enough, I may perhaps marry both, but at all events I have no intention to refuse either !" replied Agnes, in her most conceited tone. " Are you in jest or in earnest ?"

" Why ! both ! That strange girl Marion has given them each a good round decided negative ! I did not think she had it in her nature to be so positive."

" Impossible !" exclaimed Agnes, with angry vehemence, while her eyes seemed literally striking fire. " This is some ill natured

jest of yours; but Marion understands Captain De Crespigny too well to fall into any such absurd mistake. She knows he is secretly attached to me, though indeed that has been no secret for ages past, and Marion never hinted to me that he had an idea of proposing to her."

"No! Marion is exactly the sort of person never to mention what might hurt the feelings of another, especially as you would probably not have believed her; but I had yesterday a point-blank, *bona fide*, serious, and even solemn proposal to make her from De Crespigny, which I had to decline with all the usual regret, surprise, gratitude, offers of friendship, and so forth. It is a great inconvenience, Agnes, that both your strings should break in this way at once; but Marion is a perfect loadstone for attracting the attentions, the hearts, and the good opinions of all mankind! I have seen both these affairs coming on for some time, and it is really awkward and irritating to be placed in such a predicament with all my friends," continued Sir Patrick, in the tone of an ill-used man,

thinking only of his own grievances, while Agnes, feeling herself extinguished at a blow, gazed in his face with a look of pallid amazement. "If Granville could only be sunk to the bottom of the sea," added Sir Patrick, impatiently, "I would not beckon with my finger to bring him up again!"

When a separation is inevitable, those who depart have generally the advantage, in seeing a variety of interesting novelties, to force their attention, and occupy it; but while the thoughts of Mr Granville reverted continually to Harrowgate, Marion's became now more than ever engrossed with Sir Arthur, whose nerves had been greatly shattered by his recent adventure, and who ardently longed, as soon as his health was in any degree re-established, to be again in the quiet sanctuary of his own home.

Amidst scenes where she was hourly reminded of the happy past, Marion delivered herself up to the pleasing consciousness of Richard's unalterable attachment. Though circumstances had now separated, and might keep them apart for months, she felt a steady

assurance that their mutual attachment could never be shaken by either time or distance. In the solitude of her own heart, Marion hoarded up many treasured remembrances of what he had said, and how he had said it, while the most transient of Mr Granville's remarks seemed indelibly imprinted on her recollection. She read the books he liked, practised the music he admired, traced out all his favourite walks, and lived with him as the continual companion of her thoughts.

Marion's was an unclouded sunshine of hope, as she confided so entirely in her absent lover, that she would quite as soon have distrusted her own heart as his; yet day after day, and week after week passed on, without a line ever reaching her from either Clara or Richard, and little did she dream, while suffering from the melancholy monotony of their long-continued silence, that letter after letter, written from heart to heart, with ardent affection and entire confidence, had been consigned to a premature end by the order and contrivance of Sir Patrick; but nevertheless, with all the ardour of a young and

sanguine mind, she daily expected a satisfactory explanation, and still looked back upon the past with unembittered feelings.

Marion's was not a weak, wavering, suspicious, or fanciful nature, but high and generous in all things, she had not lightly confided her happiness to one on whom she could not implicitly rely. She knew his attachment to be one of principle as well as of inclination, and though uneasy lest Mr Granville might be ill, she entertained no jealous apprehension that he had become changed, but perseveringly trusted, believed, and hoped the best. Many a time had Marion's heart throbbed, and her colour risen with a tumult of hope, as she watched the return of Martin from the post-office, and the flutter of expectation faded sadly away in mournful disappointment, when she found that another day and night, at the very least, must be added to her long and weary disappointment, for no "hope deferr'd" makes the heart more sick, than vainly watching for a letter, in which the happiness of a lifetime is involved.

"Out of sight, out of mind!" said Agnes

sarcastically one day, when she observed the look of surprise and anxiety with which Marion was leaving the room, after seeing hoards of letters brought into the room from every quarter but the right one. "Marion! as Shakspeare says, 'No word from Goodman Dull yet?' That is just like men in general!"

"It may be like men in general, Agnes, but it is not like Richard," replied Marion, colouring and smiling. "On him I have the most consummate reliance. We can both depend on our perfect knowledge of each other, and I shall not break the long chain of our mutual faith by a single doubt. I have given him my confidence, and that was all I had to bestow."

"Well! as some sensible poet remarks, and I quite agree with him," said Agnes, with a peevish dicontented sigh,

> '———— The maid that loves
> Goes out to sea upon a shattered plank,
> And puts her trust in miracles for safety.'

Marion, you are no believer in disappointments I see!"

"No, Agnes! Those who have loved light-

ly may change as lightly, but I should little deserve the inestimable happiness of having known Mr Granville so entirely, did I not always believe him above the suspicion of caprice. We have read each other's mind and heart, we have been willing to trust each other in life and till death; therefore now, unless Richard were to tell me with his own lips that he had changed, I would not believe it,—and scarcely even then! This alone is affection that deserves the name, not to torment him with distrust, nor to take up the first cause of offence, but with unenquiring confidence to judge him as I would myself be judged. It would add a pang to the sorrow of separation if we believed ourselves at the mercy of every idle suspicion; but I know his heart to be as incapable of deceit or dishonour as my own."

In the mean time, Mr Granville had continued to write from abroad with unceasing assiduity, believing that some unexpected obstacle must have occurred to prevent Marion from answering his letters, but never suspecting that she did not receive one of the

many he had written. In his candid and elevated mind, there was no room for jealousy or suspicion, and, conscious that the transparent nature of Marion's nature admitted of no concealments, he rejected every angry or impatient thought. The more he saw of other society, the more dear she became to his memory now, while his attachment was of that deep and lasting kind over which the accidents of life have no influence.

"Miss Dunbar," said Captain De Crespigny, one evening, placing himself on a sofa beside Marion, while Sir Patrick, to whom he had been speaking very earnestly some minutes before, anxiously watched her countenance from a distance; "I wish you were now seated in one of Merlin's chairs, from which no one can rise till a story be finished. I have something to say, so important to myself, and let me hope also to you, that I expect to be heard to the end."

"Of course, if you wish it," replied Marion, in a faltering, agitated voice. "But, Captain De Crespigny, allow me to remark how unlikely it is that any subject can very deeply

interest us both. I trust and hope we fully understand each other."

"It is time, indeed, that we should," replied he with emotion. "And if I dare say all I wish, it would still be less than I feel. Dunbar assures me you are still at liberty to consult only your own inclinations, and let me hope I am not entirely the dupe of my own vanity, in believing that I might yet conquer your indifference. Since the hour we first met, I had eyes for no one but yourself. Even when we could not converse I have watched you with ceaseless interest, and am for ever thinking of you in absence, counting the hours of my existence only by those passed in your society. Why then do you so obviously avoid me? Why am I for ever made the companion of Miss Smythe or Miss Anybody-else? You know and see that my whole object in life is, to remain beside yourself. Every look, word, and action tells you as plainly as language can speak that I love you to distraction, that my attachment has not been hastily formed, to be as hastily laid aside, and now my only apprehension is, that

by too openly disclosing my feelings the confession may separate us for ever, yet it can no longer be delayed, for I must know at once now, whether I am to be happy or miserable for life?"

"Patrick has done very wrong," faltered Marion, while tears sprang into her eyes. "I told him long ago to let you know all. It is most unfortunate that your preference should be given to one of the very few who never can return it. You ask for a heart which is not mine to give. My engagement to Mr Granville cannot be soon fulfilled, but while we both live, we shall live only for each other."

"That, Dunbar assures me, can never take place," replied Captain De Crespigny, while a dark red flush passed over his countenance; "and till it does, I cannot cease to hope. Nothing is more annoying, I know, than the perseverance of an unrequited attachment, but I must cling to the faint and haggard hope which remains. A mere taper is extinguished by being blown upon, but a fire burns only the brighter. The greatest feli-

city of life would not be good enough for you, nor so much as I wish you, provided only we share it together, but with another, I cannot wish you happiness. No! the words would choke me. May you never find any till you find it with me. If you can ever feel one relenting thought in my favour,—if, dissatisfied with another, you think with even momentary regret of me, then, were I at the extremity of the earth, let me but know of it, and you shall find that I have been true as the dial to the sun, even though not brightened by its light."

Captain De Crespigny continued with vehemence of tone and manner which nothing could interrupt, while Marion's countenance became more and more expressive of grief and confusion.

"If I have been to others the reckless, inconstant, and unprincipled being you think, all who ever suffered a pang on my account are now revenged. I never really loved any one but you! All else was fancy—vanity—anything but love. Were others like you, there could be no changeableness or caprice, but

never have I seen before, and never shall I see again, so much to attract affection and to secure constancy. Hereafter a solitary recollection of the hours spent with you will be my only remaining happiness. Happiness!! there is no such word for me now! You who delight in making all others happy would condemn me to misery! The thought of my defeated hopes will for ever ring upon my heart. The remembrance, that when I asked that of you, which I never asked before, you coldly and indifferently rejected me."

"Not indifferently, but with heartfelt gratitude for your disinterested preference," answered Marion, in a low agitated voice. "If already married to another, I could not be more decided in saying, that you must never renew the subject again, for I owe it to you, as much as to myself and Richard, to say that my answer is final,—that we never can be more to each other than friends, but that I sincerely hope the time may come, when we shall meet as we did formerly, without emotion, but with kind and cousinly regard."

"Never! oh never! The very thought

shows you have never loved as I do! I could not be in the same room with you,—no! not in the same kingdom. You may pity, if you cannot love me," replied Captain De Crespigny, with a deep gasp of acute disappointment; and seizing his hat, he rushed out of the house, nearly suffocated by contending emotions; but as he ran, rather than walked, towards his lodgings, the first and foremost of his thoughts was, under all circumstances, and at all hazards, to persevere with unalterable pertinacity, and only with his dying breath, to resign the hope of success.

CHAPTER IX.

When bow'd by woe, and bleach'd by with'ring age,
Alone the mourner treads the world's cold stage,
His fortune wreck'd, his friends beneath the sod,
Where shall he fly, but to the arms of God.

R. MONTGOMERY.

LIFE is indeed a complicated and mysterious drama, in which Agnes felt more and more dissatisfied with the part she had to play. Harrowgate had been the theatre of many interesting scenes to her; but now Lord Doncaster had departed with a vaguely-expressed hope of her visiting him at Kilmarnock Abbey; and when Sir Arthur felt sufficiently recovered to begin his long-desired progress towards home, she slowly and sadly prepared to accompany him.

Before they reached Portobello, winter had already covered the earth in a shroud of snow and of ice; the birds no longer carolled gladly on the boughs; the rustling leaves had ceased to fall; the naked trees hung their dejected branches, in bare and stern desolation, and the blood-red sun glittered on the cold and barren fields. "Winter's dumb." All life and joyfulness had departed from the face of nature, which looked, as Agnes remarked, like a wedding-cake without the ornaments; and amidst weeks of dreary discontent, she compared the death-like contrast of nature now, from what it had been, to her own sadly altered feelings. She appeared constantly now to be in a state of restless, almost feverish excitement, always evidently expecting some event which never happened, while she became daily more depressed and irritable.

Marion, in the mean time, during many a long and dreary evening, resolutely buried beneath a smiling aspect, her own anxiety respecting Mr Granville's unaccountable silence, and devoted herself as entirely to Sir

Arthur's comfort, as if there had not existed another being upon the earth; yet still, every knock at the door made her heart palpitate with hope, and every note brought into the room, caused her a new pang of disappointment and surprise.

If a grain of hope or joy were to be found in any circumstances, Marion's was a mind to sift out and enjoy it; and her buoyant spirit now shielded her from a too sensitive apprehensiveness, while she repelled the withering fears that might have forced themselves on a heart less candid and trusting. Her whole spirit rebelled against a vagrant thought of Richard Granville's inconstancy or indifference; though in Sir Patrick's letters from the continent, there was much that might have insinuated distrust into her thoughts; but Marion clung to the unswerving belief of her lover's infallible truth. She knew that the stamp of Christian excellence was on his whole character, engrained in his very being, and only to decay with life itself; therefore her opinion was not at the mercy of any idle representations; but the blast which

might have uprooted a superficial attachment, only deepened the root of her own, which nothing could undermine.

Mr Granville, in the mean time, having long ceased to hope for any answer to his letters, became more and more impatient for the time when he might seek a personal interview with Marion, of whose constancy not a doubt ever crossed his imagination; while day after day he watched with saddening apprehension over the declining health of his sister, whose failing strength required all the affectionate attentions he lavished on her, especially when, after a few weeks, Sir Patrick also arrived at Florence, and Clara shrunk with blighting, heart-broken grief, from every engagement that might endanger her meeting him. She mournfully acknowledged, that having at first esteemed as well as loved him, she was still unable to conquer her misplaced affection; and that while nothing could induce her to unite her fate to Sir Patrick's, or to place her happiness in his care, still the painful consciousness that he was unworthy and dishonoured, weighed the more deeply upon her

spirit, and crushed her whole heart with anguish.

The constancy with which Sir Patrick tried to regain her affection, was deeply touching to Clara's young mind; and in vain she tried to blot out his name with her tears. Still, Mr Granville, with inextinguishable hope, continued to believe that the germ of life must be stronger than it seemed; but day after day she faded and drooped. Change of air had done less than nothing for Clara's feeble frame and wasted strength; while she spoke often, with a smile of affectionate interest, respecting her brother's future life, though he observed with emotion, that her own name was never included, and that only when talking of a world hereafter, did she ever speak now of their being together.

"We must die to be perfectly happy," observed Clara, one day, in a tone of calm and elevated peace. "My sun has set in the morning, Richard; and it might have seemed hard thus early to leave such a world, so beautiful, so fragrant, so joyous, and embellished by such affection as yours; but we know that

sin has destroyed this whole magnificent creation; that misery, decay, and death, are hid beneath all. It is the glorious discovery of Christianity that we are immortal; that we are created, not for time, but for eternity! So long as my spirit continues to lodge in this most fragile of human bodies, I must have sorrow and suffering to prepare me for throwing off the homely garb of an earthly nature, and assuming the glorious garments of heaven."

Mr Granville covered his face with his hands, unable for some moments to reply, while Clara continued, in a tone of solemn sadness and fervent emotion,

"The near approach of death fills my heart with strange and wonderful thoughts! When, like the lightning from the cloud, my soul departs from the body, O then, Richard, how I shall learn to know the value of our immortal salvation! It bewilders me now to think, that I myself shall survive that glorious sun, the solid earth, and all the wonders around us; that I shall see and understand all the miracles of creation; that I shall know and love

all the wisest and best of human beings who ever existed on the earth; and that I shall then be wiser than the wisest, as well as happier than the happiest of mortals. Richard! that is marvellous! and were it not for leaving you, I could rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable, and full of glory."

Mr Granville clasped Clara's emaciated hand in his own, and would have spoken, but his voice failed; and after an ineffectual effort, fearful of agitating his sister, he turned away and was silent; but she saw his unutterable grief, and continued,

"You could have borne this better if it had been yourself, Richard; but I leave you in the hands, not only of an atoning Saviour, but also of a sympathizing friend, who will send you comfort according to your utmost need; and, my dear brother, let us now remember, that as the infidel La Harpe said, there is one text in Scripture sufficient either to live or to die on, 'God so loved the world, as to give his only Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

Mr Granville solemnly bent his head in token of acquiescence, and closed his eyes, but large tears, notwithstanding every effort, coursed each other down his face, and he avoided looking round, while Clara in tremulous accents continued,

" Before long I shall live only in your memory, and well do I know the place you will give me there; but remember, dear Richard, when my mortal frame is dissolved, that you will have another relative then awaiting you in heaven, and that I shall yet be in as active a state of consciousness there as here. When we are separated, you must still sometimes revive old times, by reading with Marion the books I have loved—by listening to the music I have delighted in—by walking in my accustomed haunts at home—by rearing my favourite flowers—and most of all, console yourself, my dear brother, by reflecting, that when you and Marion are both worshipping God together on earth, I shall also be adoring Him in heaven :—

> ' Tis sweet, as year by year we lose
> Friends out of sight, in faith to muse
> How grows in Paradise our store.' "

The wintry year rolled on till Christmas eve, when Agnes, with a discontented yawn, loudly wished that she had been born in the planet Jupiter, where there is no winter at all. That night she announced after tea to Sir Arthur, that she was about to leave home for several weeks next day, being engaged to spend some time with her friend, Mrs O'Donoghoe. A considerable air of trepidation appeared in her voice and manner when she spoke; and Marion, having recently observed that her sister's thoughts were continually pre-occupied, felt startled and amazed at the look of agitated determination with which she intimated her approaching departure, after which she hurried towards the door, anxious apparently to avoid all discussion; but Sir Arthur, in a tone of mild authority, called her back, and drawing in his breath between his compressed lips with evident vexation, he assumed an air of grave but ironical humour.

"May I take the liberty of inquiring, Agnes, whether you have fully investigated all the stories we heard at Harrowgate respecting Mrs O'Donoghoe's former connexion with

Lord Doncaster, and what she actually is, before I consent, on very short notice, to entrust her with my niece."

"Oh! she is everything on earth most delightful! You need not have a minute's anxiety about me, uncle Arthur! I can take excellent care of myself! Nobody knows my own value better than I do!"

"Convince me of that, Agnes, if possible; but you are aware that my whole heart abhors your recent very unaccountable intimacy with that contemptible old *roué*, who shall be nameless," replied Sir Arthur, with strong deliberate emphasis. "Any continuance of that exceedingly familiar intercourse would be utterly improper; and as for a young girl of your appearance setting out on a wild ramble with any Irish adventuress recommended by Lord Doncaster, let me hear of her having some very different introduction, or I cannot allow you to go."

"My dear uncle! I would dig my own grave and bury myself, if any thing prevented me! As for your permission," exclaimed Agnes, her whole face illuminated with angry

eagerness, "I shall certainly be most happy to have it; but if people strain the cord too tight, it sometimes snaps altogether! I have made myself a positive promise never to decline a good offer, and go I must! Mrs O'Donoghoe is tó take me in her own carriage, free, gratis, and for nothing. Only think how very kind!"

"My dear Agnes," replied Sir Arthur, while his brow darkened with mournful anxiety; "I cannot wonder if you tire of the dull monotonous house I have to offer you. A perfect mausoleum indeed! It is a premature old age for girls like you and Marion to be, evening after evening, the companions of a solitary old man. Often of late I have considered in vain how it could be remedied. Yet, my dear girl, there might be a solitude far worse, if you lose the respect of others, and the peace of mind you may enjoy with me. Hearing what I have lately done of Mrs O'Donoghoe, and knowing all I do of Lord Doncaster and the Abbé Mordaunt, I must lay my positive prohibition on your accompanying them now. You may think me a

whimsical old man; but Agnes, you cannot long be troubled with my care. Loaded as I am with the weight of years and infirmities, my life is like a spark on the ocean. Its fleeting joys and troubled thoughts are drawing rapidly to a close; but if this were the last words I am ever to speak, you must not go unprotected into such society."

The Admiral walked with slow and musing steps up and down the room, his fine countenance flushed with agitation, and his eyes shaded by his long white hair, exhibiting an expression of mournful solicitude. Marion's heart swelled with agitation, while inwardly moralizing on the officiousness of Irish widows, and Agnes bit her beautiful lip with a look of resolute determination, flashing glances of angry surprise at her uncle, and pouting her beautiful lip, though the reverence which Sir Arthur never failed to inspire kept her silent.

"Tell me, Agnes," continued he, stopping at length before her, with a look of benignant kindness, "is there anything within the compass of my powers that could be done to

make up for this disappointment? We who are old must not forget that there are pleasures for the young which they naturally wish to enjoy. If there be any place you wish particularly to see ——"

"It is not places, but people, that I care for!" interrupted Agnes, peevishly. "With respect to this excursion, it is impossible for me to get off. I shall go deranged if you interfere with it! The party is made on purpose for me, the horses are bespoken, my things all sent to Mrs O'Donoghoe's, and nothing left for me but to bid you good-bye!"

"This is little short of an elopement, Agnes!" replied Sir Arthur, with a mild but resolute countenance, while there was a tone of strong resentment in his voice. "What good object can there be in a scheme so clandestinely begun! But I have no legal authority to detain you, if affection and kindness are insufficient!——One thing only let me say, painful as it is to my feelings," added the Admiral, while his whole frame shook with emotion, and he walked several times across the room. "In the name of your father,

Agnes, I forbid you to leave my roof with the party you speak of; and if, in defiance of all propriety, you do go, then —— —— I would have said, never return here again; but no!—I cannot say that to my brother's child. No!—till my home is in the grave, you may share it with me. Come back when you will, Agnes, and if I am alive, you shall be welcomed."

Marion caught the hand of Sir Arthur in her own, and kissed it with ardent affection, while she felt a tightening in her throat, and a mist before her eyes, till tears fell fast and thick, like rain, upon her cheek; but Agnes, with whom kindness, in its most impressive form, could excite no generous impulse, rose in silence, and hurried out of the room.

That night, after Marion had been asleep for several hours, she suddenly started up in bed, with that bewildered feeling of perplexity experienced by those who are unexpectedly aroused at an unusual hour. It was four o'clock in the morning, and a pale, cold, livid moon-beam streamed faintly into the room, giving a chilled and spectral aspect to all

around. A death-like stillness reigned beside her, and unable to account for having been so suddenly disturbed, she was about once more to consign herself to repose, when she heard the noise repeated which she had begun to fancy must have been only a dream. She listened in trembling astonishment, for it seemed as if in her uncle's room over-head, some persons were trampling up and down the room, drawers opening and shutting, heavy weights falling on the floor, and a sound sometimes reached her, as if several carpenters were at work.

Finding there was no mistake, Marion sprung out of bed, threw on her dressing-gown, rushed up stairs, and having hastily thrown open the door, she stood there transfixed for a moment with amazement and fear. Through the glimmering dawn of light, she saw that Sir Arthur was up, and completely dressed, while he appeared to be hurriedly groping about the room, as if packing up for a journey. He seemed unconscious of Marion's entrance, who stood for several minutes watching him in speechless perplexity and

consternation, while her very blood forgot to flow, when she saw the stony look of his eyes. His countenance was of an ashy paleness, his long grey hair matted over his forehead, his expression sad beyond mortality, and when she took his hand in her own, it felt cold and damp. His eyes wandered over her face for a moment, without any apparent recognition, and then giving a smile of utter vacancy, he resumed his occupation with restless eagerness.

"Uncle Arthur! dear uncle Arthur! what are you doing?" exclaimed Marion, throwing her arms round him, while her limbs were faint, and quivered with fear. "Speak, dear uncle! Speak to your own Marion! Why do you not speak?"

A deep silence ensued. Sir Arthur evidently did not hear her. His cold livid lips moved as if he would have spoken, but not a sound became audible, and with the same vacant smile as before, he turned away. The terror-stricken Marion now felt utterly appalled. A death-like sickness came over her, horror and darkness seemed gathering over

her mind, and apprehensive lest her senses might entirely fail, she hastily and vehemently rang the bell, calling loudly for assistance.

Marion's was an intellect of that high tone which rises to meet a great emergency, and though nearly paralyzed by grief and terror, when she first saw the fearful ghastly smile with which her uncle gazed around him, she now endeavoured, by gentle persuasion, to make him lie down in bed, and tried, by speaking in accents of tenderness, to recall his recollection, while impatiently longing for Martin to appear, and during the few minutes that elapsed till he entered, it seemed as if time itself had ceased to move.

The doctor was at length summoned, and having pronounced the Admiral's illness to be caused by an oppression of the brain, threatening apoplexy, he attempted to bleed his patient, though almost without success, for Marion observed, while she held him in her arms, that the blood scarcely flowed, till after some time, he uttered a fearful convulsive cry, which rang through the room, and fell back

in a violent spasm, the immediate precursor of apoplexy.

Awe-struck and paralyzed with grief, Marion clung to her uncle, and remained by his side, watching with deep and solemn affection every turn of his features, while her cheek assumed the hue of death, her tearless eyes were motionless, her quivering lip compressed, and she remained as silent and immoveable as if the mortal shaft had reached herself. Without shedding a tear, or breathing a sigh, she bent over the distorted countenance of Sir Arthur, and assisted in cutting off the long white locks of his hair, which she had so often loved to look upon, but which were now strewed all unheeded on the bed, and again seating herself by his side, she riveted his hand in her own, becoming white and motionless, as an image of marble.

Notice had been sent to Agnes' room of the afflicting event which had taken place, and Marion expected every instant that her sister would appear; but time passed on, and she came not, being one who systematically avoided any scenes of distress, therefore she satis-

fied herself with sending frequent messages of inquiry to the door. At length, after some hours, Sir Arthur appeared to have recovered his recollection, for he looked at Marion with a feeble smile of deep affection, and laid his hand on her head as if to bless her, but words were denied him; he struggled in vain to speak; and she who had not yet found the solace of a tear, now bursting into an irresistible agony of weeping, sobbed aloud. After gazing long and tenderly in her face, Sir Arthur's eye-lids at length closed with fatigue, and still clasping her hand in his, he fell into a peaceful quiet slumber of many hours' duration.

Those who have most leisure to contemplate death, generally think least about it, and no one had ever meditated less on the subject than Agnes. She occasionally remarked, when the infirmities of the old and the indigent were forced upon her notice, that they might hope soon to be released, and that to them it must of course be a happy escape. The busy and active, she thought, had scarcely time to die; and, for herself, she considered death as a very unpleasant subject, which fifty years

hence must be attended to, when the joys and the dreams of her present life had vanished; but it seemed to her most preposterous now, to lower her spirits by melancholy reflections on what could not certainly be avoided, and would come only too soon in the end. In short, her whole plan of life was, "To-day to sparkle, and to-morrow die."

Marion had stolen away to complete her midnight toilette, before she settled for the day beside Sir Arthur's pillow, when she was amazed near the door to meet Agnes, hurrying past in travelling costume, and anxious, apparently, to avoid being seen, though, when an interview became inevitable, she tried to carry it off with careless audacity, being evidently in a perfect delirium of high spirits, which she vainly tried to conceal.

"Well, Marion! I am quite relieved to hear from Martin, that there is not the slightest danger! The doctors also say, that everything has taken a favourable turn, though, as for their opinion, I have despised all physicians from Esculapius, down to the magnesia-and-rhubarb doctors of the present day. They all

tell us the same thing of an invalid, ' If he does not die, he will certainly recover !'"

Marion listened with a look of grave and melancholy surprise; while Agnes, trying not to seem aware of it, and evidently anxious to avoid any reply, fixed her eyes on the door, as if impatient to proceed, and continued, in rapid accents of assumed bravado,

" You are looking really ill, Marion, and must have got a dreadful fright! It would have killed me altogether! But make your mind easy; for these attacks are, I am told, very common. The Duke of Middlesex had ten or twelve, and people live often for years after the first, which is a great comfort."

" They do sometimes, but not always," replied Marion, with mournful gravity. " My dear Agnes, do not be too sanguine. This is a very serious attack. You may hope, but I cannot; for it seems to me that our uncle is laid on a bed from which he never will rise again."

" Oh! you are nervous, after being so frightfully alarmed this morning. It must have been very shocking," said Agnes, shaking her well-

arranged ringlets, and attempting to get up a melancholy look; but in her mind there never was any of that gentle feminine apprehensiveness for others, which is so amiable and so endearing. "I feel quite confident that in a few days he will recover; but for the present, Marion, you see everything through a darkened glass. I have no fears whatever," added she, in a tone of superior wisdom. "Old people always remind me of a creaking door, for ever complaining, but never any worse! It is lucky for those who have nerves to endure it all. I have none; therefore, being of no earthly use here, I should be quite in the way. Indeed, a single week of moping at home, with fright and anxiety, would lay me up also."——

"You are not going, Agnes? Impossible! Listen to me for five minutes."——

"I am not equal to the exertion! What can I do? It is out of the question to break off my engagement now! I am really between the horns of a dilemma, and must be tossed upon one or other of them. Both Mrs O'Donoghoe and Lord Doncaster have set their hearts upon having me; and, as the school-

boys say in their speeches, 'It must be so! Agnes, thou reason'st well!'"

"If we are sisters, hear me," replied Marion, in accents of breathless indignation. "Agnes! you cannot, you must not think of going."——

"But, as the lover says in the Critic, 'I can, I must, I will, I ought, I do!' Marion, you do not know the importance I attach to my excursion, which will last only a few days. As for this absurd affair of Sir Arthur's, you think every breeze a hurricane; but it is well over now, and, since he is ordered quietness, he will miss me the less, or perhaps not at all, if you never mention my absence. Certainly my forte is not in a sick-room, and yours is. My chief fault, as an attendant on sick people, is, that I am good for nothing. As for danger, Marion, I do not see any."——

"Or, rather, you will not see any. Agnes, I would not for ten thousand worlds leave him now. Our best—almost our only friend, and probably dying," exclaimed Marion, while hot, scalding tears rushed in torrents from her eyes. "The question now is not, whether Sir Arthur will be restored as he was to us? but only,

how many days or hours he can be kept from the grave. Every passing moment is a knell of death to my heart, when I think how few more we shall see before he is gone for ever. If you consider nothing but mere appearances, Agnes, you ought to stay."

"As for appearances," replied she, clasping her bracelet, "I am of opinion with the Abbé Mordaunt on that point, as on most others, that those who study appearances have seldom any realities to boast of."

"Such sentiments might be expected from such a man, but I should not certainly have supposed you would act upon them, especially now. Believe me, Agnes, your own heart will reproach you for ever after. The danger is immediate and very great," said Marion, while her tears fell drop by drop on the ground. "My uncle is hovering over the very brink of the grave, therefore, for my sake, and for his sake, do not leave us."

"But for my own sake I must! You have a teazing, exaggerated way of stating things; but pray, remember now, Marion, the maxim Madame D'Ambert taught us at school,

'*Pour porter legèrement la vie, il faut glisser sur bien des choses!*' I always prefer hopes to fears, and hate that desolate dreary look of yours this morning. You wish to rule and direct everybody, but I will not be governed or trampled on," said Agnes, in an angry imperious tone. "I did not suppose as much could be said on any subject in the world as you have said upon this. One would think, from your way of talking, that Sir Arthur was nobody's uncle but yours; or that I did not know how to act for myself! Well! I hope, for my own especial happiness, very soon to be independent of those who never have appreciated me."

"At all events, we have loved you, Agnes."

"Yes! of course. Ah! here is the carriage! Good bye then! Sir Arthur will never miss me while you remain; but write often, though where in the wide world to direct your letters is more than I remember; but, Marion, we see in the Times newspaper every day, advertisements entreating persons who have left their homes to return, that all their wishes may be granted, therefore, when you and Sir

Arthur want me back, pray insert something of that kind. Good bye !"

With heightened colour, and eyes fixed on the ground, Marion received the hand of Agnes, and gave her one parting look of expostulation, hoping to the last that nature and feeling might yet make themselves heard; but when Agnes had sprung into Mrs O'Donoghoe's carriage, and kissed her hand with a parting smile, every trace of agitation vanished from the face of Marion, but a band of irom seemed around her head and her heart, as she slowly turned away, disgusted and astonished at her sister's heartless levity, and in the privacy of her own room, she sank upon her knees and offered up solemn fervent prayers for the many to whom she was attached, but, above all, for her much-loved uncle.

CHAPTER X.

What now to him is all the world esteems?
He is awake, and cares not for its dreams,
But lives, while yet on earth, as one above
Its hopes and fears, its loathing and its love.

CRABBE.

WITH all the acute susceptibilities of youth, Marion now experienced, for the first time, what it was to watch over an almost hopeless illness, and, with a shuddering sensation of unutterable woe, she tried to obtain that comfort from above, which nothing on earth could supply. Days passed slowly on, the longest and most melancholy she had ever known, while most of her hours were spent in prayer, but all around was gloom. Nothing could be more oppressive to her than the subdued whis-

per and stealthy step of Sir Arthur's attendants, his vacant seat, his darkened room, the mute and solemn looks of his physician, and, above all, the inward anguish with which, hour after hour, she sat with his hand in hers, watching the fluctuations of his feeble pulse, observing with awe and grief the pale ensigns of death gathering over his features, and feeling as if every laboured breath he drew gave him but a momentary reprieve from the grave, while she could not bear to contemplate the probability of burying with her beloved uncle, all the dear and tender ties that bound them to each other.

With no one to console her, and nothing on earth to screen her from the desolating blast of grief, the whole fabric of her worldly happiness seemed crumbling to dust. Her heart was like an exhausted receiver, and her spirit sank, yet no inducement could have withdrawn her for an hour from that scene of solemn, deep, and awful melancholy. Throughout the long dreary hours of night, each of which seemed an eternity of anxious care, Marion felt too deeply impressed with the so-

lemnity around for the indulgence of any violent emotion. Nothing is so silent as intense feeling! Stunned and stupified by the sudden affliction, a wild chaos of sorrow, fear, and amazement rushed through her young mind, filling her with agony, which tears could not relieve; but now was the time for that supernatural aid given by Divine grace to the humble believing Christian. In silent speechless prayer, Marion found her first and only relief, then she felt that her heart was read, and her sorrows pitied, by One who has shared every human grief, carried every human sorrow, and to whom the suffering sinner never applies in vain.

One morning, the grey light of dawn stole through a crevice of the shutters, while, in her lonely silence, Marion felt as if the whole world were in a trance, and not a sound was heard, but the slow ticking of the clock, reminding her that time and death are for ever advancing. She sat watching every minute change of that beloved countenance shattered by sickness, and evidently sinking in decay, when Sir Arthur unexpectedly opened his eyes,

which once more beamed with intelligence, as he fixed them with a look of touching mournfulness on Marion, and called her by name. That voice which had so long been dear to her, now sounded strange and unnatural, being palsied by weakness, while the glassiness of the grave was in his eye; but Marion, forcibly subduing all appearance of emotion, stooped down, and, with a momentary gleam of hope, kissed his pale forehead.

"Marion! we have loved each other well," said he feebly, extending his hand to her. "For your sake I would stay, old and weary as I am, but the far better will of God is otherwise. Before that clock strikes again, I shall be in a better world."

Marion covered her face with her hands and attempted not to speak, for she saw that the sure hand of time, and the heavier hand of sorrow, had indeed done their work. It was but too evident that Sir Arthur would never see another night, for he was about to awaken in the mighty dawn of eternity, where no darkness ever would follow. The frail, old, worn-out tenement of his body, so full of infir-

mities, was now to enter its rest; his head, whitened with age and suffering, had been anointed with peace, and, having partaken with cheerful thankfulness of the banquet of life, he was evidently willing to make way, that others might fill his place; not disgusted or dissatisfied with existence, but thankful that he had tasted better joys than those of earth, and desirous to enjoy them at last in never-ending perfection. A mysterious conviction is generally given to the dying when their disease becomes mortal, but though nature shrank at first from the solemn change, religion supported the powerful mind of Sir Arthur, who added, in a tone of commanding calmness, while a beam of ineffable peace overspread his countenance,

"You are now my sole earthly care,—as you are my only earthly comfort. It breaks my heart to leave my Marion worse than alone, while Patrick and Agnes remorselessly pursue their own pleasure, careless how you are trampled down in their wild career.

"Dear uncle!" whispered Marion, wishing to soothe him; "you consigned me to the

care of Richard Granville, and year after year, while we live, you shall be remembered by us both with the affection and gratitude of children to a parent."

"I did hope, my dear girl, that I should have lived to understand his conduct, and even now, while standing in the gloomy porch of death, it would cheer me to see him and dear Henry again. If Granville be the man I believe him, he will come immediately to see you now, and all will be satisfactorily explained,—if not, the world is worse than I thought."

"If Richard is alive he will come, dear uncle,—but oh! what a meeting it would be without you!"

"Take comfort, dear Marion. Think of me often, but let it be with consolation. My long life seems but a span! May yours be blessed with every affection of this world,—with every hope for eternity,—and may your death-bed be attended by one as dear and affectionate as mine is. May your eyes be closed in the same undoubting faith, and may I be permitted to meet you on the very

threshold of heaven, and in the august presence of Him, whom 'not having seen we love, and in whom believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'"

With a face livid as death, Marion choked back her sobs and restrained her tears, while she listened to every faltering word Sir Arthur said, as if her life depended on hearing him. When he became silent from exhaustion, she attempted to whisper a few broken expressions of grief and affection in his ear. Unable, however, to think or speak under the weight of her sorrow, she might have been mistaken for a corpse, but for the look of living agony in her eye, while struggling with a sorrow which tears or lamentations could not have expressed, and could not have relieved.

At length Sir Arthur's breathing became uncertain,—his majestic chest heaved convulsively,—a damp cold dew broke out on his forehead,—the heart which had beat with every kind and noble emotion, could beat no more,—and, giving a last glance of fond affection at Marion, a grey ashy hue stole over

his features, and his countenance assumed that strange peculiar aspect which is seen in death, and in death only. Marion saw it, and long afterwards that look was for ever before her sight. Nothing in all the earth is so unutterably sublime as death. Strange and solemn was the mysterious horror, the inexplicable wonder, with which Marion, for the first time, witnessed the soul forsaking its earthly tabernacle. Day after day, when she returned to watch beside all that now remained of her earliest and kindest friend, while her heart seemed scorched and seared with grief, she gazed on the mortal form in ruins before her, its light extinguished,—its tenant departed,—its whole nature in a moment transformed,—and, forgetting sometimes for a moment her own grief, her loneliness, her deep and fearful bereavement, she thought but of that purified spirit now emancipated into the regions of eternal glory, and almost longed for the period when she also might become as indifferent to the things of time as the inanimate corpse beside her. Often, however, she tried, with an eye of faith, to look

beyond the portals of the tomb, remembering that death is to a Christian, like the setting of the sun, for while lost to human sight, he still exists and shines with unfading glory and everlasting brightness.

When Sir Arthur's remains were placed in their coffin, Marion felt as if the last link were severed between them. His better part had, indeed, already departed, but the cold image before her was still associated with all she had ever known of happiness or affection, yet, in the strong agony of her grief, when all seemed a gloomy chaos of solitary desolation, she felt consoled by reflecting that her own devoted care had assisted in smoothing his passage to the grave; and she could not but think how great must be the joys of another world, when such affliction as hers was not worthy to be compared with them. A wide horizon of sorrow seemed before her, long days of loneliness and longer nights of grief; while, though young in years, she already felt old in affliction, for a blight and mildew were upon her spirit. Marion's sanguine mind and ardent feelings had nothing near her on which

to rest, the whole energy of her being, for the time, seemed crushed and withered, the future appeared to stretch before her mind in a long vista of moving shadows, and the memory of past happiness, like gold in the hand of a drowning man, sank her only the deeper in grief. Her beloved uncle seemed still to be every where,—yet she saw him not. In all the earth there was not a thought which did not pierce her, or a worldly hope which did not now bring an icy chilliness to her heart,—for a dark cloud had fallen between her and all those whose affection once adorned her existence.

It was now that Marion, like a tempest-tossed vessel, surrounded by darkness and fear, turned for direction and help to that steady and benignant light burning at a distance, which alone could direct her into a haven of rest. Her sorrow became gradually illuminated by hope and peace. She clung to every shattered wreck of happiness which remained, and sinking on her knees, she felt that no one could ever be completely alone, or completely miserable, who rightly used the

privilege of speaking her wishes in prayer to that great and holy Being, who is the father and the friend of all his earth-born children. Marion had long believed, that the happiest life is that most conformed to the will of God—that grief arises from not believing whatever is appointed to be really best; and now she found in the Bible that comfort which is nowhere else to be gained. The deepest emotions of this world remain unseen and unknown to all around; for the strength of character which gives power to feel, gives power also to hide, and there is a modesty in real sensibility, which admits not of display; but Marion, cut off now from all the tenderest sympathies of life, became the more zealous and diligent in preparing for that hour when "mourned and mourner lie together in repose."

> Oh! if belov'd ones from their hallow'd sphere,
> May witness warm affection's faithful tear,
> At this deep hour, they hear the mourner's sigh,
> And waft a blessing from their homes on high.

CHAPTER XI.

"T'is greatly wise to talk with our past hours."

At Florence, Clara Granville lingered and recovered, and lingered again, sleeping little, eating nothing, and patiently trying every remedy, though she herself was without hope of recovery, till at length, decorated in all the radiant colouring and bright beauty of consumption, she sank slowly but surely, evidently hastening to the grave, though still Mr Granville, with the tenacity of affection, continued to hope, and still he told himself that she might perhaps yet be spared. Day after day he sat beside her couch, reading, conversing, and praying with her, while his brotherly

attachment seemed to grow only the more engrossing and considerate the longer she needed his care; but it became evident to all around, that his cares and hopes on her account were drawing to a close, and that his sorrow must soon be without hope in a present world, though full of hope in a world to come.

Letters now reached Mr Granville, announcing that his long-pending law-suit had been at length finally decided in his favour, giving him an income more than equal to his utmost desires; but letters far more deeply interesting to his feelings still were missing. Often and anxiously had he watched for a single line from Marion, yet so well had Sir Patrick arranged the measures which, as her guardian, he persuaded himself it might be allowable to take, in order to intercept her correspondence, that not a single letter ever escaped the vigilance of his emissaries; and Mr Granville, though he still cherished as his best earthly treasure the belief of Marion's attachment, felt so painfully perplexed respecting her, and so grieved for Clara, that the almost

unexpected change in his circumstances appeared scarcely worth a thought, while a dense curtain of sorrow seemed gathered around his spirits.

If the vital spark of his own existence had been about to expire, Richard could scarcely have felt more deeply than now, beside the dying bed of his young and lovely sister, who took his hand in her own one day, while a fixed expression of tenderness and grief appeared in her speaking eyes, and there was a melting softness in her voice when she said,

"My only reluctance to die is, dear Richard, because I must leave you! This is sorrow; but our sorrow shall hereafter be turned into joy. When patience has had her perfect work, you, like myself, have a sure and certain hope of a better world, and, unlike me, you have a hope also for this life, which contains the best blessing left to man upon the earth. Yes, Richard, you will soon have a loved and trusted companion, suited in every respect to yourself; and with her, I trust, you may enjoy a long course of usefulness and of joy after I am no more."

Mr Granville kissed his sister's forehead with deep and solemn affection, while his cheek became pale and his lip quivered; but his heart was too full to reply, and Clara proceeded:

"We have saved ourselves much unnecessary anxiety by placing a firm and well-founded confidence in dear Marion. Let that remain unshaken, Richard, till you meet," said Clara, fixing her large mournful eyes on him; and slowly closing them as she faintly added, "Tell Marion I died without a doubt of her constancy and truth. And now, there is but one wish remaining to me in life, Richard—only one—"

Clara hesitated, the hectic colour deepened on her transparent cheek, her lip trembled, and she became silent, while Richard took her hand in his own, and listened with affectionate anxiety for what was to follow; but it came not. With a look of desolate grief Clara turned away her head and was silent, while Mr Granville, using every term of affectionate endearment, entreated her not to let him suppose there was a wish of her heart

unspoken, or a desire which he could grant, unfulfilled. After a short struggle, during which he was alarmed by the greatness of her emotion, she seemed at length to have entirely conquered her feelings, and said in a perfectly calm, unimpassioned voice,

"A letter was conveyed to me last night—I know not how it came—from Sir Patrick. He has been some time in Florence—he sends every morning to inquire for me! I am told he even watches daily till the doctors come out, and asks how I am!"

"True, dear Clara, and I feel for him deeply."

"Richard!" added she, raising herself up with sudden energy, and clasping his arm, while her large bright eyes became fixed on his, "I wish to see Sir Patrick once again! to have a last conversation with him on this side of the eternal world. There is a sacred power in the words of a dying friend, and I would summon the whole faculties of my being, to bid him a last and solemn farewell. He has always listened to me. If I have any influence, let me use it now. Think what a blessed conscious-

ness I yet might carry to the grave, if our unhappy attachment were no longer a source of misery to both, but of real and eternal advantage. Let me make a final effort of life and of affection, to leave in his heart a thought of immortality. Such a hope might almost hold back my spirit from the gates of death! Dear Richard, I shall rise for half an hour to-morrow, and then let me see him!"

"It would destroy you, Clara! you are quite unfit for the effort; but give me a message. Say what you please; and, painful as it must be, I shall see Sir Patrick personally. We can sympathize with each other now, as we never did before, and I shall deliver your very words. You are unfit now, Clara, for any agitation."

"Dear Richard! you never yet denied me anything! Do not now refuse my last—my very last request. Whatever be the faults of Sir Patrick, his attachment was disinterested and generous. I cannot die in peace without saying that I am grateful,—without, at least, endeavouring to convince him, for his happiness now, as well as hereafter, how true

it is, that 'he sins against this life who slights the next.'"

"It might be a work of usefulness and mercy," replied Mr Granville, in a musing tone; "and if there be a pleasure in life you can yet enjoy, dear Clara, I am not the person who could withhold it."

"That I know! In this world which has so long been my home, Richard, I have never lived a moment without being the happier for your affection, and it will be so for ever. I am now counting the last grains of my sand-glass as they fall, and ready to go alone through the portals of the tomb. Every sorrow is about to be eternally forgotten, every blessing to be eternally enjoyed. Most of my feelings and affections are already transferred to another and a better world; while I ought, as a dying Christian, to be like an eagle soaring to the sky, and seeing nothing but the sun, yet, Richard, the hope of serving one whom I loved only too well, still lingers round my heart, and will not be repulsed. Say then, Richard, that we may meet;—tell him that, standing on the very brink of eternity, I feel as if, even in an-

other world, it would increase my felicity to know, if permitted to look back upon earthly scenes, that I had not left him without hope or consolation."

"I do not believe, Clara, that the invisible world is very distant; but only that it is hid by the grossness of our mortal bodies; and I do believe, my dear sister, that we may both, perhaps, yet see the influence of your prayers and of your last words upon one whom I most sincerely pity," said Mr Granville, observing the mild, full, melancholy eyes of his sister fixed upon him, while gradually, as he spoke, her countenance became irradiated with peace. "The ways of Providence are indeed wonderful! If Dunbar be willing to forget all that has ever been amiss between us both, I have forgotten it long ago. If he choose it, we shall become friends, till Marion makes us brothers."

"Oh that I could live to see that day, and then close my eyes in peace; but it must not be! In a few hours I shall have shed my last tear, endured my last sorrow, and conquered my last enemy. Who would not be willing, then, to change time for eternity, the suffer-

ings of earth for the joys of heaven, misery for happiness, and a dying life for immortality?"

A lovelier morning never had smiled on the glad earth, than that in which Clara Granville received the visit of Sir Patrick alone. On a couch near the open window, into which the sun poured a flood of light and warmth, propped up by cushions, Clara, with an unearthly brightness glittering in her eye, and burning on her cheek, looked more like a celestial spirit than a creature of earthly mould; but what passed between them, during the long interview which ensued, no one could tell. Clara's features, when it was about to close, betrayed no agitation, but continued almost motionless for some time, while the tone of her voice became slow and languid. Gradually her words appeared fainter; her voice grew nearly inaudible; the colour which had tinged her cheek died away; and a death-like paleness succeeded. Not a groan was heaved, nor a feature disturbed; but scarcely had Sir Patrick time hastily to summon Mr Granville, and to support her in his arms, before her countenance

became rigid as marble, and her ethereal spirit had mysteriously fled from its mortal dwelling.

> Loveliest of lovely things are they,
> On earth, that soonest pass away:
> The rose, that lives its little hour,
> Is prized beyond the sculptur'd flower.
>
> Ev'n love, long tried, and cherish'd long,
> Becomes more tender and more strong,
> At thought of that insatiate grave,
> From which its yearnings cannot save.

Sir Patrick's grief and horror now became almost delirious, and he was tortured by a feeling of unutterable agony; yet still he seemed resolute to doubt the fatal truth, to hope against hope, to believe that by a miracle Clara might at length awaken from her seeming repose; but her hand grew cold within his own, and the glassy fixedness of her eye carried death to his heart. He felt and knew that all was over, yet he could not allow himself to credit the solemn event; till, at length, covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud in all the anguish of a sorrow without hope or resignation.

Mr Granville, forgetful, apparently, of his

own grief, tried now to impart consolation from that rich fund of sublime peace and everlasting hope which belongs, at such an hour, to the Christian; for, though his own feelings were lacerated and torn with a sorrow that seemed as sudden as if he had never till now expected it, still there was a balm for his wounded spirit, which soothed the first anguish of his sufferings, and would at last, he knew, bring him daily more abundant consolation. No affliction seems to come so directly from the hand of God as the death of those who have been so truly loved; and in contemplating the wide gulf which now divided him from Clara, the manly spirit of Mr Granville was overpowered with grief. This seemed a moment too awful for vehement sorrow. He had watched the last struggle of existence in one with whom every thought and emotion were hitherto shared, and now, while her beloved and well-known features remained the same, all intercourse and all sympathy between them had at once been closed; and, in the hours of solemn contemplation which followed, Richard felt more than ever a desire to learn

what is seen and felt when the gloomy curtain of life is withdrawn, and the glories of eternity are first revealed; but, checking the speculations of a vain curiosity, he opened the pages of holy inspiration, there to find an inexhaustible fund of sublime and elevating comfort, convinced that, to have his affliction sanctified, was even better than to have it removed.

The sympathy established between Sir Patrick and Mr Granville now brought them daily together, when the young Baronet learned, in such society, to venerate and admire that holy faith, which as yet he could neither feel nor comprehend; and every hour he became more conscious of its happy effects on the mind and heart of Richard Granville, who seemed always ready to forget every selfish thought, when the glory of God or the good of others claimed his most arduous and zealous devotion; and even his grief for Clara, deep and agonizing as it was, found a vent in the most implicit attention to all her wishes, and especially to her injunctions respecting

the restoration of his friendly intercourse with Sir Patrick.

> The darts of anguish fix not where the seat
> Of suff'ring hath been thoroughly fortified,
> By acquiescence in the will supreme,
> For time and for eternity.

CHAPTER XII.

I trace upon her altered brow
The ashes of a thousand dreams.
WILLIS.

THERE is said to be a stage in sorrow, after which any addition can be borne with apathy; but this the heart of Marion seemed never likely to reach. It is a natural source of comfort, however, in mourning over the loss of those we love, to find that they are appreciated and lamented by others; and many kind letters of condolence on the death of Sir Arthur reached the young mourner, from old companions and recent acquaintances. Some were written with overdone and inflated expressions of sorrow, as if the writer

had lost a parent of her own; and if the occasion had been less heart-breaking to herself, Marion might almost have smiled at their tone of exaggerated grief. Others wrote studied compositions, so beautifully got up, and with such skilfully turned periods, that the writer must have felt certain of Marion's "Life and Correspondence" being hereafter collected and published; while others concluded with "Yours, in haste," as an evident apology for neither head nor heart being much enlisted on the occasion; but all were received with grateful interest, being more or less a proof of kind intentions, very soothing to the feelings of a solitary girl.

Each letter, as it came, caused her a palpitation of hope, followed by a pang of disappointment; for every morning she arose with a confident hope that now Richard Granville must certainly write, and every evening closed in with an added weight of discouragement and sorrow; for now indeed the roses of life seemed all to have faded, and the thorns only to remain.

As Shakspeare observes, "every one can

master a grief but he that has it;" and among the many well-meaning but common-place acquaintances who came to gossip over the sorrows of Marion, and to ascertain exactly how much Sir Arthur had left, there was not one to whom she could unveil her feelings. Each of her well-intentioned visitors said a few words in praise of Sir Arthur, enough to convince Marion that no one but herself could appreciate the hundredth part of his inestimable worth—a sentence or two then followed of pious reflection, obviously spoken with restraint, and picked up by rote from some volume of religious meditations, and the whole was generally concluded in a masterly manner, by repeating a few texts of Scripture, strung together from a concordance.

There is a solemn dignity in real grief, beside which all common-place or trifling consolations fall powerless and cold; but strangers, in return for their contributions of sympathy and comfort, evidently expected from Marion an ostentatious display of affliction, and were often not a little disappointed, at the pale,

still, concentrated calmness of the lonely girl, who, subdued beneath the weight of her recent sorrow, received visitors only when she felt able to do so with composure, speaking to them with gentle, melancholy kindness, and evidently endeavouring to derive all the comfort she could from their society; yet often in the solitude which followed, did she feel inclined to agree with an author, who remarks, that "*la pitié n'est pas le plus due à celui qui pleure dans la solitude.*"

Marion seemed to live in a dream, yet she gazed on the day-light and the people moving about on their errands of pleasure or business, till she felt that the whole was a sad reality. The common every-day routine of life seemed strange and unnatural, amidst the agony of her first sorrow, when the tomb had so recently closed over her earliest friend. She felt as if nature herself should have suspended her ordinary course, and as if the melancholy awe so impressed upon her own heart should extend to everything animate or inanimate around—as if the very sun itself should scarcely rise and shine as heretofore; and nothing

appeared to Marion so strange, as that sameness visible in the outward world, contrasted with the mighty revolution in all her own inward feelings. Marion tried to take a lesson in cheerful resignation, from thinking sometimes of the many created by the same Almighty Father, and yet suffering far more than she had ever done; and her eye fell one day on a blind beggar, seated near her window, shivering with cold, emaciated with hunger, solitary and deserted, shut out from the light of day, friendless, homeless, and desolate, with none to sympathize in his sorrows, or to cheer him by their affection. "Yet," thought Marion, "that miserable being finds an object to live for, and would not perhaps willingly die! God gives something to all his creatures; and who makes me to differ from the most wretched. But bodily wants are not the real sorrows of life! O no! The mind, when relieved from such abject cares, has more leisure to grieve over withered hopes and blighted affections; yet all trials, if rightly received, are but blessings in disguise. It is well if, by tasting such sorrows as mine—

and they are many—I am taught to avoid the far greater and more permanent evils of futurity. In this world we are suspended over the abyss of eternity, by a thread which grows more feeble every hour; and all events should be welcome which are ordained by infinite wisdom, to prepare me for that hour when my place on earth shall be vacant, and my place in eternity—in a ceaseless eternity, shall be filled."

Time has wings, even when they move most heavily, and as day after day passed slowly onwards, Marion felt more and more astonished to hear nothing of Agnes, who had written but once, a very few days after her departure from home, in gay and almost triumphant spirits, boasting of the excessive attention she met with from all the party, of the splendour in which they travelled, of the admiration she had herself excited, and of several magnificent presents she had received from Lord Doncaster. In a postscript to this letter, she expressed a careless, patronizing hope, that poor dear Sir Arthur was now convalescent; and as for anything but a recovery, she seemed no

more to doubt it than if death had been altogether abolished. To Marion's surprise, when looking at the signature of Agnes, a broad line had been drawn through the name of Dunbar, and the whole was surrounded by a fantastic wreath of flourishes, exactly imitating the very peculiar way in which Lord Doncaster was accustomed usually to encircle his own autograph; and much she marvelled what this uncommon device was intended to indicate, though she secretly dreaded to hear the interpretation of it which her fears had at first suggested.

As the mind and heart become more matured in this world, they too often become, from sad experience, more apprehensive of evil, and more suspicious of earthly friendships, but it was otherwise with Marion in respect to Richard Granville, though a dark curtain had fallen suddenly between them, all intercourse was most unaccountably suspended, and the very thought of his attachment, once a pleasure without alloy, was now accompanied by a heavy leaden depression and anxiety. She told herself a thousand times over that

all would hereafter be explained, and yet her heart seemed turning to stone, while day after day dawned and closed without a line to give her comfort or to reassure her heart.

In this state of wearing suspense a visiting card was brought to Marion one morning of Captain De Crespigny's, accompanied by a letter which he had brought from Sir Patrick, strongly urging on her, in almost arbitrary terms, his earnest desire that she should reconsider her decision against his friend, and no longer wasting her affections on a penniless curate, who had proved himself undeserving of her,—bestow them where they would be so much better appreciated, and where they would exalt her to so distinguished a situation. Marion was astonished to think how Sir Patrick could know that she had any cause of dissatisfaction against Mr Granville, whom she had never even named of late; but resolute if possible to avoid meeting Captain De Crespigny, she was denied again and again when he called, though to her surprise he persevered in almost daily inquiring for her, and numbered his visiting cards conspicuously

on the corner till they amounted at last to more than a dozen.

Marion was sitting alone one evening, beside her solitary hearth, and to a spectator she would have seemed of more than earthly beauty, though the cold tear stood unheeded on her cheek, while her memory had become haunted by the ghost of departed happiness. She thought of her deceased uncle in his silent grave, yet it seemed as if still she could trace his step and hear his voice by her side. All was still as death, her soul seemed wandering in a mysterious existence, amidst the solitary and deserted world, and hope itself grew dim within her breast. The flood-gates of memory were now unclosed, pouring into her heart and spirit a ceaseless stream of old recollections, old scenes, and recent sorrows, while the bright mirror of joy which had once shone in radiant splendour before her eyes, seemed broken now to shivers. No one seemed destined hereafter to know the deep mine of thoughts and affections which lay unspoken in her breast. She felt as if the summer might shine in its brightness, the spring might

be gay with the blossoms of hope, but that her spring and her summer would return in this world no more, yet she believed and knew that it was better to witness the death of every dear affection, and the burial of every promising expectation, if, when thus blighted and withered upon earth, they became rooted and strengthened for eternity.

> " What empty shadows glimmer nigh!
> They once were Friendship, Truth, and Love!
> Oh! die to thought, to mem'ry die,
> Since lifeless to my heart ye prove!"

Martin had brought in the tea-tray, and Marion scarcely noticed his entrance or departure while mournfully gazing on the dim embers expiring in the grate, when her attention became suddenly attracted by hearing a carriage draw up close to the door, and her pale cheek grew paler, when a moment afterwards her sister hurried into the room, and with a strange, wild, hysterical smile, clasped her arms around Marion, and locked her in a long embrace. Marion thought no grief too great for the loss they had both sustained,

and yet she became startled to perceive that Agnes was actually shivering with agitation, that her eyes were blood-shot, her hair dishevelled, her whole form shrunk and altered, while her lips quivered for a moment as if she would have spoken but could not articulate, and a look of unutterable anguish swept across her pallid countenance. At length, burying her face on Marion's shoulder, she exclaimed in a voice of thrilling agony,

"I knew you would welcome me! I knew it Marion! Cold and heartless as I have been, you will not reproach me! You deserve a better sister."

"I could love no other so well!" replied Marion, alarmed and shocked at the unexpected excess of Agnes' grief. "We are all the world to each other now, Agnes!"

"Yes! yes! Who ever dreamed it could come to this! You alone will pity me, Marion! Here at least I shall find a refuge, till I find one in the grave! Do not look so alarmed, Marion! If I had brought disgrace to this house, I never would have entered it again, but I have been duped,—made miserable,—

and worse than all, ridiculous! The whole world will laugh, and well they may, but, in the living death I have brought upon myself, still one friend remains who will never reproach me for my folly. Dear kind Sir Arthur too, if he had lived! Alas! Marion, I know his value now, but I know it too late! To obtain his forgiveness I could follow him to the very grave."

Marion gasped for breath, and tried to suppress her emotion, that she might compose the mind of Agnes, whose voice had become hollow, her eyes were brightened by fever, and there was a frantic energy in her tone and manner so fearfully agitating, that Marion entreated her to postpone all farther discussion till she was better able to bear it, but Agnes continued to pour forth her words like a gushing torrent.

"I shall be better when all is told! hear me out now, Marion! Believe me it is better! You remember Dixon?—that wretched woman who attempted once to destroy me. She stole into my room at Mrs O'Donoghoe's some weeks ago. Imagine my horror and

affright when she entered! Dixon related to me her own history,—seduced, ruined, and forsaken by Captain De Crespigny. She fancied at first that he had deserted her for me, but she has since discovered, as I have done, Marion, that he is attached only to you!"

"It matters little, Agnes, who Captain De Crespigny fancies for a passing hour, provided it be one whose happiness cannot be injured by his caprice."

"Dixon added," continued Agnes, with a gasping sob of angry emotion, "that Lord Doncaster had been equally deceived into believing that his nephew liked me,—that I was the only obstacle to his marrying the heiress, Miss Howard, and his whole attentions at Harrowgate were paid to expose my self-interestedness,—he had carried it on as a farce to amuse an idle hour. The plot had amused him, and, after a time, he became flattered by the consciousness that a girl, young, beautiful, and admired, as I was, could be induced to accept him; but Mrs O'Donoghoe is now actually his mistress! Spare me, Marion, the recapitulation of all that passed: it is too

humbling, too dreadful. She told me, that Captain De Crespigny, the only man I ever loved, had spoken of me to his uncle—as—as I deserved, with scorn, derision, and censure! She repeated the whole scene, and I then saw myself as I am in the sight of others, seared in heart, degraded, contemptible, wretched, and oh! how ungrateful to those who were indeed my friends!"

Marion saw that Agnes, when she spoke, gazed at the portrait of Sir Arthur, and tears sprang into the eyes of both, as they looked on that silent memorial of past worth and affection.

"My reputation must be irreparably injured in the world's eye by such association!" continued Agnes rapidly. All is agony and horror! While Dixon yet spoke, I hated myself and everything around. Shame and mortification overpowered me! All became shadowy, confused, and wavering in my thoughts. That night I was seized with fever and delirium. A sick-nurse was placed to attend on me; and I am thankful to find that Mrs O'Donoghoe, with her party, instantly left the house.

I am ashamed to think what folly my ravings must have disclosed! The worst horror of fever is, that it betrays all to others! I hovered on the very brink of the grave! Oh! that I had been as fully prepared to enter another world as I was to leave this! How happy are those whose trials and mortifications are buried in the silent grave, and whose pulse is no longer like mine—the knell of a living death! Life is indeed an awful gift, with its deceitful hopes, and consuming sorrows!"

"Yes, if we will not be satisfied with the happiness provided for us by God himself;—if we will persist in laying out a plan of life for ourselves, and in being wretched when the infinite wisdom of our Creator sees fit to alter it. Even now, Agnes, you may, if you choose, have peace and cheerfulness. How much better it is, to lose all your lovers, than to marry a bad husband! Let us live for each other; let us improve our minds; let us console the many who are worse off than ourselves; let us encourage one another in all the difficulties of life; and, whatever is wanting to us now, we can look the more thankfully forward

to those regions of eternal joy, for which our sorrows here are all sent on purpose to prepare us. Dear Agnes, for my sake you must not despond."

"I ought not, Marion, while you are my sister! I hate the world and every thing in it, but who would not love you," replied Agnes, in a voice of dark and stormy grief, while no tear was on her cheek. "My heart seems dry as summer dust! My body is a dreary sepulchre to my mind, all dark, cold, and desolate. There is nothing in life worth living for!"

Though little of Agnes' depression was really caused by Sir Arthur's death, yet her grief became now as deep as crape and bombazeen could make it. She had not the generosity to struggle against her mortified feelings, or to spare those of Marion, but from day to day her wayward mind seemed to cherish the chagrin which inch by inch consumed her. No gentle self-renunciation appeared in her sorrow, but she seemed to fancy that in all the world there was no tear except of her shedding,—no sigh but of her breathing,—and she forgot to observe how Marion had banished

all her own anxieties and cares while listening to the egotism of grief in another, thus bearing the whole burden of both. Agnes gradually delivered herself up to a state of peevish, listless, apathetic despondency. If she attempted to read, her eyes looked only on a wilderness of words without meaning, she had no taste for work, not a correspondent in the world, and never had cared for a newspaper; therefore unable to fix her attention on any employment, she proceeded with sullen mechanical indifference through the ordinary routine of life, without energy and without interest.

Agnes' mind was like a crushed butterfly, disfigured and valueless, all its buoyant hopes and fantastic flights for ever at an end. She knew not that sunshine of the heart often divinely given amidst the darkest hours of life, when inward peace, amidst external sorrow, might be compared to a cheerful quiet room, while a torrent and tempest are raging unheeded around. Agnes mistakenly believed that the only possible aggravation to her melancholy would arise, if her thoughts were

turned to religion, since hitherto she had seen in it nothing but the gloomy terrors of futurity. She never had cultivated any taste for reading that infallible balm to the depressed, and least of all would she have thought of appealing to the Holy Scriptures for relief from the cankering irritation of her proud but broken spirit, and nothing had ever annoyed her more, than when Marion, one day, from the fulness of her own heart, observed with soothing gentleness, that they should be too grateful for the blessings bestowed, to repine for those which were withheld, especially as affliction was generally the surest way to amend the heart.

"Yes! but in mending you may break it," replied Agnes, discontentedly. "My existence here is a living death, with nothing to care for, nothing to hope for, and nothing to do, meditating continually on my feelings, hating life, and yet dreading death."

"But," replied Marion, laying her hand on the Bible, "here, Agnes, I find enough to care for, enough to hope for, and more than enough to do. No mortal being has all his

wishes granted, and why should we expect to be an exception? The world and its affections have deprived us of peace, and this is the only guiding-star which can lead us to find it again. If we were to study a portion of this volume together every day ——"

"Marion! I am surely melancholy enough already, without becoming methodistical!" interrupted Agnes, impatiently. "I wept when I was born; and every day since shews me I had cause to do so! If I ever do get up my spirits again, I may perhaps read the Bible more carefully, but not while I feel so low and depressed."

"You remind, me, Agnes, of Lady Towercliffe saying last year, that she felt much too ill to see a doctor, but would send for one if she became better. We find ourselves lonely and benighted now; but here is a bright path of glory pointed out, and strength offered us to pursue it."

"Well, Marion! if you must soar to the clouds, pray leave me to grovel on the earth!" replied Agnes, peevishly. "You are so fond of reading now, that, like Petrarch, your head

will be pillowed on a book when you die; but can you not talk of something more cheerful to me? Those mournful subjects are fit only for a death-bed, or a tract. When people talk to me of religion, I always feel like the felons at Newgate in the condemned pew, with their coffins gaping at their elbow! What makes you always talk so dismally about resignation now, Marion?"

"My own sorrows and yours, Agnes. We both need comfort, and neither of us can find any, except in religion. 'God gives what bankrupt nature never can.' The effect of time would be only to benumb our hearts; but faith could restore them to cheerfulness."

"You might as well plant flowers on a tomb-stone, as attempt to enliven me, Marion! It is a hopeless endeavour! No! the wing of hope is broken within me for ever and ever. It is the misfortune of having too much feeling! Life seems to me a cold and bitter blast, with all its events, like snow-flakes, driving in my face. I have been brought into it with-

out my consent, and shall be torn from it against my will, while

> Dream after dream ensues;
> And still I dream that I shall still succeed,
> And still am disappointed."

"Yet, Agnes, there is not probably a single living being with whom you would change places!"

"Yes! hundreds! thousands!"

"Indeed! Would you take the looks, habits, tastes, age, health, and conversation, of any other person who could be named, instead of your own?"

"No! not exactly! Probably no person living would agree to such an exchange, and least of all one who has in some respects such ample reason to be satisfied," replied Agnes, with a complacent glance at the mirror, which was not, however, so satisfactory as in former days; for her eye had lost much of its lustre, the bloom had faded from her cheek, and her very features looked crushed and contracted by the gnawing effect of mortification. "I should like to have the fortune

of Caroline Howard, the rank of Charlotte Malcolm ——"

"But Agnes! you are not entitled to expect such a pic-nic of happiness, 'made of ev'ry creature's best.' No; the more we look into life, the more we shall see how equally distributed are its enjoyments—satiety to the rich, contentment to the poor, and compensation of one kind or other to all, for their various privations; but one only gift of God makes life a blessing or a curse, according as it is given or withheld; and it is only in proportion as we have the gifts of Divine grace showered upon us, that we can measure our own happiness, or that of any other mortal being."

Agnes's ill-humour was growing rapidly into misanthropy, and her sorrow seemed never likely to be of that kind which "forgets to weep, and learns to pray;" but Marion's more happily gifted mind clung to every natural source of enjoyment which offered itself, being resolute, even when she was not happy, for the sake of Agnes, to appear so. Marion's sorrows taught her to feel tenfold for others;

but the sympathies of Agnes were concentrated entirely on herself.

There is not merely piety, but good-humour also, in being happy; and much ill-temper is invariably associated with that grief which refuses to be consoled. Agnes had strewed her own path with thorns, and would not be comforted; her heart had now the frozen coldness of an ice-bound stream, on which the breeze might play, or the sun might shine, while it still continued cold and cheerless as before; but Marion, resisting all the selfish supineness of sorrow, found out many around to whom her time could be made useful. With no schemes of worldly ambition, she felt that there must be, in every heart, some object to live for; and in her solitary walks, the very trees and flowers became her companions, while the brightness of nature's colouring, the hum of bees, the chirping of birds, the ripple of a pebbly stream, or the daisy she picked on the grass, reminded her that there are simple pleasures she was born to enjoy, and of which she had formerly been deprived during the long years when her best feelings had

been heartlessly wasted in the tumult of education at Mrs Penfold's. On first beholding any sign of human life and enjoyment, it seemed to Marion strange and unnatural. The joyous laugh of children at play in the fields, grated harshly on her ear; but before long, she pleased herself with listening to the milk-girls gaily singing as they passed along the road, and was ready to feel for that most desolate of all beings, the blind fiddler, playing his melancholy tune on a rainy night. Religion was to Marion now like the sun behind a fog. She knew that it would before long warm, cheer, and revive her; yet for a time it seemed shorn of its brighter beams, and, in the words of a Christian poet, she was ready to say,

> "Give what Thou can'st, without Thee I am poor,
> And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."

The emotion which Agnes felt on first returning home, had been only like the last quiver of molten lead before it becomes cold and hard for ever. She now grew daily more

peevish and discontented, and, far from affording any relief to Marion, only aggravated her distress; for if there were any subject more disagreeable than another to be harped upon, she fastened on it with ceaseless irritability, continually prophesying evil, and recollecting injuries. She took the most teazing view of all circumstances, attributed the worst motives to everybody's conduct, and spoke with incessant and bitter invectives against all those by whom she thought herself ill-treated. Far from forgiving injuries, she seemed never, even for a moment, to forget them, while the effect of her tedious vituperation was like that of a file upon velvet, to the gentle Marion, who tried often to give a more Christian, as well as a more cheerful turn, to their *tête-à-tête* conversation.

It was singular that Agnes still evidently found a mysterious pleasure in exercising to the utmost her powers of torturing; and in nothing did she so deeply wound the feelings of Marion, as by constantly comparing the conduct of Richard Granville to that of Captain De Crespigny, speaking coldly of both, as

being selfish, hypocritical, and deceitful. Marion's whole heart shrank from allowing any resemblance, while once or twice she spoke warmly and eloquently in defence of her absent lover; but finding that this only lifted the veil which concealed her own inmost feelings, and exposed them to one who made no generous use of her confidence, she at length passively allowed Agnes to follow the bent of her humour, and kept their discussions as much as possible on indifferent topics, taking always as cheerful and contented a view as she could of life.

"You know, Agnes," observed Marion one day, in answer to some peevish lamentations of her sister's, "we might as well attempt to carry the ocean in an oyster-shell, as to satisfy our immortal souls with anything in this life. Christians must not let their imaginations run wild after every fancy, but put on the strait-waistcoat of reason and religion, to curb their inclinations. We should not only expect, but desire the correction which is necessary, as much for us as for others. You cannot expect all our years to be summers!"

"No!" replied Agnes, discontentedly; "but they need not all be winters! You seem to think we are like the Indian savages, who must carry a weight on their heads to make them upright."

"Yes, Agnes, I do!" added Marion, gently. "It often occurs to my mind what a character mine must naturally have been, which has required so much discipline to correct it; for every sorrow or anxiety I feel is absolutely necessary for my good, I know, or it would not be sent. Though the blossoms of hope lie withered at our feet, however, let us reap the fruit hereafter, and who could wish to be fed with the promises of spring, rather than with the fulfilment of autumn?"

CHAPTER XIII.

Oh the dark days of vanity! while here
How tasteless! and how terrible when gone!
Gone! they ne'er go: when past they haunt us still;
The spirit walks of every day deceased,
Or smiles an angel, or a fury frowns.

YOUNG.

DURING the deepest midnight, the unseen light is still incessantly approaching, though man remains insensible of its progress till the glorious dawn of morning; and thus the march of coming events hurries daily on unnoticed and unknown. Never before had it appeared, to the impatient mind of Agnes, that the sands of her hour-glass fell so slowly and silently. In her heart there was scarcely sufficient depth of soil for grief to strike a very permanent root, as her superficial feel-

ings were calculated only to produce a mushroom crop of petty discontents and selfish grievances. Sharp and acute as the pang of her disappointed vanity had been, it seemed destined not to be very lasting, as Marion, on returning one day from a long walk, almost smiled to find Lady Towercliffe seated in their small parlour, and diligently pouring a torrent of lively gossip into the ears of Agnes, who felt little disposed at first to become interested in all the ill-assorted marriages people might choose to make, or to care who had died, or were likely to be born, but gradually her mind had been opened to the consideration of whether Miss Brown were a suitable match for Mr Grey,—whether £500 a-year might possibly be enough to maintain Captain Jackson of the 10th and Lady Maria Meredith, whose individual expenditure on dress amounted to £400 per annum each, and whether it would be best for Lieutenant Stanley and Miss Maynard to marry and settle in Australia, or to continue single and remain at home.

Agnes had no possible chance of seeing the

parties, or of influencing their decision. She would probably never hear more of them, nor had she been previously aware of their existence, yet the magic of Lady Towercliffe's eloquence gradually led her on to argue the merits of each case, as if she had been the arbiter of their fate, till at length, being insensibly roused from her stupor of melancholy indulgence, the visit was concluded by Agnes joyfully consenting to dine at Lady Towercliffe's next day, to meet a party of friends.

After having feared that her sister never would smile again, Marion now, with glad surprise, heard Agnes once more actually laugh, and she could not but wonder that Lady Towercliffe, by putting her through a course of gossip, and administering to a "mind diseased" a strong mixture of love affairs, quarrels, sicknesses, and bankruptcies, had acted on the spirits of Agnes as a counter-irritation, so that, in the contemplation of other people's miseries, she attained a spurious resignation beneath her own. As sorrow is the rust of the soul, everything that traverses the surface, has a tendency to scour it

away, and the scattered links of Agnes' happiness seemed brightening now again, as if they might at last be reunited into as glittering a chain as before, while her cheek resumed its wonted hue and her tongue its wonted volubility. After the first great affliction of life, it is said that the sufferer never is again the same, that "the heart can know no second spring," but now there seemed every probability that, though the drooping pinions of her ambition had been lowered, Agnes might soon put a patch on her worn-out spirits, and be only too much restored to her former self. When the carriage next day arrived, which was to convey her to Lady Towercliffe's, Marion, ever ready to enjoy any happiness reflected from the eyes of others, bid her good night with a sensation of real pleasure at this unexpected revival.

There are strange coincidences in every-day life, and the small dinner party at Lady Towercliffe's accidentally contained the two last persons on earth who would have wished to meet. When Lord Towercliffe received Agnes with friendly cordiality at the door, he

had not yet relinquished her hand before he suddenly felt his own grasped with a convulsive start, and when he hastily looked up, the countenance of his newly arrived guest had grown pale as that of a spectre, her eyes were closed, and he felt her hand become as cold and heavy as lead. Too well-bred to notice her strange emotion, which there was an evident effort to conceal, he naturally ascribed it to the remembrance of recent family affliction, when now, for the first time, entering society again, and he silently led Agnes to a seat beside Lady Charlotte Malcolm and Miss Howard Smytheson.

Agnes did not once look round the room, but she heard the low deep tones of a voice with which she had too long been familiar, though now it must for ever be to her the voice of a stranger. Captain De Crespigny had been, some time previously, dividing his fascinations between the only two young ladies in the room, and he continued still, with the same light laugh as before, to exhibit his rare gift of conversational humour and vivacity, after giving a slight bow to Agnes, which she

did not even see. A mist was before her sight,—a ringing in her ears,—her very heart seemed benumbed,—and her only desire being to avoid notice, while her parched lips refused to articulate, she silently fixed her large eyes on Lady Caroline Malcolm, assuming an aspect of attention, and inwardly thankful that there was something in the room at which she could look, while circumstances had thus so painfully and so very unexpectedly "awoke the nerve where agony is born."

The world, usually one great "School for Scandal," had not yet circulated the story of Captain De Crespigny's inconstancy, and Agnes' disappointment; therefore dreading above all things the contemptuous pity bestowed on a case like hers, she now exerted herself, from the fear of ridicule more than even of censure. The strongest emotions of existence are concealed in the great drama of life; and though Agnes felt herself grow blind when dinner was announced, yet she afterwards retained a confused recollection of having walked down stairs, leaning on the arm of

an officer whom she had never seen before, discussing the hue of a ribbon, or the probability of a war, while her whole heart, mind, and spirit, were torn with contending emotions.

Strange is the ignorance in which people may live respecting the real thoughts and feelings of those with whom they are at the moment in actual contact! Agnes possessed an energy and pride of spirit which supported her now, while with flushed cheeks, and eyes brightened by agitation, her volubility became like delirium. What she said to the stranger might be sense or nonsense, she neither cared nor knew, while her own laugh sounded unnatural in her ears; but still her companion listened and smiled, looking even more admiration than he felt, and while Agnes rattled on with apparent recklessness, he was inwardly conjecturing whether this could possibly be the beautiful Miss Dunbar who had endeavoured to "entrap" his brother officer De Crespigny, artfully attempting what she had not been artful enough to achieve.

When the endless dinner was ended at last, and the ladies rose to withdraw, Agnes could willingly have fled from the house for solitude; but Lady Towercliffe, to beguile the interval, importunately begged for music, and persecuted her to sing. It was weeks since Agnes had attempted a note, but, anxious to avoid notice, she tried to remember the songs best known to her. Each as it rose to memory, seemed filled with remembrances in which she dared not indulge. Who but the unhappy can tell the power of music in recalling vanished years and vanished joys! One song Captain De Crespigny had formerly accompanied, another he had admired, a third he had copied out for her. All their sentiments of love and constancy he had with ready flattery applied to herself, and each had been played or sung only for him.

Hopes and feelings now for ever extinct, crowded into her memory, a cold curdling anguish gathered round her heart, the notes died away inaudibly, and Agnes at length, leaning her forehead on the music-desk, burst

into an irresistible flood of tears, while her eyes rested at these words,—

> " Long hours have passed on
> Since that name was too dear;
> Now its music is gone,
> It is death to my ear!"

" Poor thing!" whispered Lady Towercliffe. " Her uncle's death makes a sad change in their circumstances, and she lives too much alone now. People rave about the pleasures of solitude, but I never could find them out! They are excellent for poetry, but, like the Arabian apple, they turn to ashes when tried. I never could keep up the shuttle-cock with only one battle-dore."

" Nor I! particularly in conversation," said Captain De Crespigny, entering. " There is old Crawford below stairs, with single-handed diligence, stringing off his whole book of anecdotes! I left him at No. 5, so he has three yet to come, before the gentlemen escape! The last he told was perfectly stupendiferous! That man's mind is like an old chest, but there is an end of all agreeable conversation, when

people begin drawing for it on their memories! I am so wearied now, that I shall give any one L.5 who can amuse me for half an hour!"

The solitude at Seabeach Cottage was not destined to remain much longer uninterrupted, as the very evening subsequent to Lady Towercliffe's party, after Agnes had retired in feverish dejection to spend some time in her own room, Marion was startled by a loud impatient peal at the bell, and the next moment her hand was eagerly clasped in that of Henry De Lancey, whose countenance, in returning thus to his altered home, was pale and haggard with strong emotion. Marion started up, giving an exclamation of sudden joy at his unexpected appearance, while a momentary smile flashed on her countenance, like a gleam of sunshine on the dark face of a wintry cloud; but his eye sadly wandered towards the portrait of Sir Arthur, with a long lingering look of deep affection, and, covering his face with his hands, he threw himself on a sofa, remaining for some time buried in silence, while his whole frame shook with emotion, one burst of grief following another.

It was long, very long before Henry could listen to the mournful detail of all Sir Arthur had said and suffered in his short and fatal illness; but the feelings of Marion were soothed thus to meet at last with one who thought and felt like herself. Grief that disperses itself in words and tears is speedily over; but theirs was of that calm concentrated nature which consumes the heart, though Marion assured Henry that nothing had yet done her so much good, as this happy, but most unexpected meeting.

"Did you suppose, Marion, that I could remain absent at a time like this? Impossible! I no sooner heard all, than I applied for leave. It is sad, indeed, to find so changed a home! I cannot speak of that! He was too good for this world, and is gone to a better! I can only weep to look around me here, where his affectionate smile can welcome me no more."

"Yes!" faltered Marion. "But memory, like a miracle, restores him to me every day! I seem to behold his face, to hear his voice, to know his thoughts. That calm and cheerful portrait appears to tell me sometimes how

gladly he is done with all the weary business and heart-sinking trials of this vain, perplexing world."

"When such friends part, 't is the survivor dies," observed Henry, mournfully. "In the bright scenery of an eternal world he is happy, and there a meeting is in store for us, when such sorrow as we feel now can never be felt again. For ourselves we grieve, oh! how truly! but for him, the battle has been fought, the victory gained, and his generous heart is at rest from all the fleeting joys and troubled thoughts of earthly existence. My motive in coming here, Marion, was not to indulge in sorrow, for that follows me everywhere. Grief, such as ours, depends not on time or place, but you must remember the last words my benefactor ever spoke to me in this room. He solemnly enjoined me to act as your brother. Your sacred duty, therefore, is to treat me as one, and mine to act as such. It has been hinted to me, Marion, that the man I esteem the most in this world has trifled with your affections! I cannot believe it! I was long in his confidence, and if there be truth in

man, he loves you with an attachment which nothing can alter. Half the miseries in life proceed from a want of explanation. I intend immediately to see Granville. I shall speak to him face to face, and then, Marion, if he turns out as was lately represented to me, I shall become a misanthrope for life, and believe there is neither honour, principle, nor feeling in our trumpery world!"

"It is strange! very strange," replied Marion, in an under-tone, while the rich carnation deepened on her cheek. "Several of my letters were returned lately in a sealed packet from the continent, yet Henry, you know and esteem Richard as I do. If I had been even misrepresented to him, he would have written for an explanation. I am grateful, most grateful, for your intention to see him, and unless he tells me himself that we are to be strangers, I will not do such injustice to him or to myself, as to become suspicious."

"Nor can I! Marion, I would sooner suspect myself or you, of doing wrong, than Granville, the most high-minded and high-principled man I ever knew. No! there is some mystery

we cannot solve. A thousand mistakes may occur in the absence of friends, but for his sake, as much as yours, and for my own sake, most of all, I shall see him, I shall outstrip the swiftest courier, and return with his entire justification."

Marion smiled a brighter smile than had glittered in her countenance for months, when she replied, "Henry! you were always an admirable judge of character! I might have distrusted my own opinion, but yours is an echo of it, and I know you are right!"

"But there is another business also to be discussed," added Henry, with a sudden change of tone and countenance, while his face glowed with a look of strong excitement, and he bit his lip till the very blood seemed ready to spring out. "Your sister, Marion! Agnes has been made the sport of an unprincipled, heartless coxcomb. His conduct embittered the last days of my benefactor and friend! He must and shall be made to repent it!"

"Henry! what do you mean?" interrupted Marion, startled and alarmed by his evident irritation. "Do not make me regret having

entrusted you with all our girlish fancies and follies! Such things happen every day!"

"No, Marion! Had the insult been only to Sir Patrick, he considers the happiness of others, and even his own honour, as trifles compared with immediate convenience. His sister's peace of mind might be destroyed without his having the wish, or me the right to interfere, but, in respect to Agnes, as the niece of Sir Arthur, it is not so. I know how her heart was gained, and has been crushed. It is said that ten years of ordinary suffering would not have made such ravages as are already visible in the countenance of Agnes, and she must not be so treated with impunity. ——"

"You forget, Henry, the shock Agnes had on hearing of my uncle's death,—her severe illness. ——"

"Yes! and fifty things besides! Yet, Marion, she is broken-spirited and miserable! The proud and haughty Agnes, who was the terror and admiration of my childhood, is blasted to the very root,—lost,—sunk in sorrow, and all by a coxcomb desirous only to feed

his own vanity, but a day of retribution may come upon him yet."——

"Dear Henry!" interrupted Marion, anxiously, "Do not add to what we have already suffered, by imprudence on your part. I little thought that any circumstance could ever make me otherwise than happy to meet you, but your impetuosity now really alarms me!"

"It does no such thing! at least it should not," said Henry, assuming for a moment his old vivacity of manner, but it would not do. A tone of cheerfulness in that house, now jarred painfully on his ear, and again fixing his eyes on the portrait of Sir Arthur, he added, in a low deep tone of intense feeling. "No, Marion!—in this room, consecrated to kindness and affection,—on this seat, so long occupied by the most generous of benefactors, and before that Holy Bible in which he instructed us both, I promise to speak, act, and think, as he would have dictated. My situation now is most perplexing! De Crespigny has acted the part of a brother towards me since I joined his regiment. He has courted my friendship and intimacy to a degree for which I can

scarcely account, but for which I felt most grateful, till within these few days, when a strange and most perplexing communication has been made to me."

An air of deep and anxious thought gathered over the countenance of Henry; he covered his face with his hands, and Marion listened in silence, when he continued in a rapid, agitated voice,

"The unhappy madman, Howard, wrote me lately a long incoherent letter, in which he accused De Crespigny of having instigated him twelve years ago, to that dreadful deed which made me motherless; adding, that the very peculiar weapon then found on the bed, had been furnished by him; and I have ascertained since from Martin, that De Crespigny, when a boy, had precisely such a knife given to him. I am told that he has been making many secret inquiries lately, respecting the papers found in my mother's bureau; and he frankly mentioned the subject once to me himself, saying, I little knew the deep interest he still had in investigating that affair. He is a man I cannot, and do not suspect of

a dishonourable thought in his transactions with gentlemen; but though entirely acquitting him on that point, Marion, I am determined to speak my whole mind to De Crespigny this night. He is now at Mrs Smytheson's, in the next house, and we are going to town together, when his ears shall ring with my opinion of his conduct to Agnes! I wish, Marion, that the world were peopled with better men; but the best I ever knew is no more, and the dearest hope I have remaining, is to supply his place to you, and to Agnes."

"Then, dear Henry, be prudent! It would not benefit us, if you and Captain De Crespigny were to get into an Irish rage, and shoot each other. Love once extinguished can never be forced back, and we cannot bring repentance to those who are destitute of feeling; therefore, for our sakes, be silent."

Young De Lancey strode a few hasty turns up and down the room, in agitated silence, and seemed preparing to depart, when the door was slowly opened, and Agnes glided into the room, while Henry started, looking doubtfully at first, as if he scarcely recognised

her; and then advancing, he received Agnes with an expression of warm-hearted kindness, which brought the hectic colour for a moment to her cheek.

It is said that few things mark the despondency of grief in woman, more than the neglect of her hair; but the dress and appearance of Agnes were so unlike her former self, so unheeded and forlorn, and her whole countenance was so steeped in sadness and discontent, that if, one short month before, in the pride of youth and beauty, she could have seen herself, with that changeless expression of chagrin, she would scarcely have believed in her own identity.

> Ah! nothing like the weary step
> Betrays the weary heart.

When Henry glanced at the expression of settled melancholy on the beautiful features of Agnes, a gleam of indignant emotion flashed across his countenance, but it was succeeded by an effort to appear cheerful; and by "smiles that might as well be tears," when he extended his hand, saying, with all the vivacity he could assume,

"Here I am, quite unexpectedly, Agnes! like snow in summer, or a burst of sunshine at midnight! A little surprise will do you and Marion good! It acts like an electric shock! I remember the time, Agnes, when you never gave me above three fingers to shake, and now your whole hand is presented, therefore I may feel really welcome."

"Yes, Henry!" replied Marion, seeing her sister unable yet to speak; "we shall now endeavour to get up our spirits!"

"That may be easy for those who have any spirits to get up!" added Agnes, in a tone of peevish melancholy. "But if Marion chooses to look through a Claude-Lorraine glass, and declare that the whole earth and sky are *couleur de rose*, must I wipe my eyes with my elbow, and say the same? All I can do is, if possible to forget myself to stone. You were always a light-hearted being, Henry! Would it make you serious to be told of one like me whose heart is turned to ashes? The world is a Castle of Desolation now, with not a tie that binds me to the earth—not one!"

added she bitterly, while her eyes were purposely averted from the reproachful kindness of Marion's expression. "Life is now at best a mere dead calm—a calm!—a stagnation! The sunshine of the heart is mine no more, and I only cast a shadow on every one else. It gives me no pleasure to sit for ever, like a chaperon at a ball, witnessing the cheerfulness of others in which I feel incapable of taking any share; and I see nothing around me but a gloomy horizon of past and future annoyances."

"Agnes!" interrupted Henry, in his kindest manner, "you wasted much good advice on me formerly, but now it is my turn. As an old French lady once judiciously remarked, '*Il n'y a pas de plus grande folie, que d'être malheureux.*' For Marion's sake, and your own, do not treasure up grief as if it were gold! When one plan of happiness fails, we should always change horses, and drive on with another! It is a fatal mistake to throw up the game of life, if our favourite hope fails! Try pleasure now, on

some new pattern! We should look on both sides of existence, and keep hold of it by the best handle!"

"I will! I will!" exclaimed Agnes, flinging back the long entangled ringlets from her pallid face, and forcing a wild, haggard smile into her distorted features. "Does that please you, Henry? Do I look sufficiently happy! Why are you so disconcerted? Let us all be cheerful again! Shall I sing to you, or how shall we be merriest?"

"Surely, Agnes, as we cannot mend the past, or direct the future, you might make something of the present. Remember the old proverb, 'There is a silver lining to every cloud,'" continued Henry, assuming a tone of animation. "You might find a thousand occupations which become excellent substitutes for what people call happiness. Try geology, or book-making, or worsted work! But, Agnes," added he, more seriously, "above all, take the strong staff of religion, rather than the feeble reed of earthly hope, which has pierced you, as it will pierce all who trust in it. Why are we placed on earth? Not to

contrive a plan of life for ourselves, but to learn from above what is the real meaning of happiness,—its surest source,—its brightest fountain! Behind the machinery of all human events, God is at work for our real good, and every misfortune may be transformed into a blessing, if we receive it as a Fatherly correction, and take the good it is intended to do us."

With absent listless indifference, Agnes took leave of Henry when he was about to depart; but Marion's eye glistened with emotion, as she wished him good-night, entreating that he would return soon and often.

"Trust me for that, Marion! It can never become a mere duty to visit here," replied Henry, hastily dashing away a tear. "This room is my home, more than any other on earth. Every chair and every table is endeared to me, and how much more the living inhabitants. Even that old geranium, all run to wood, and covered with dust, is consecrated by a thousand old recollections."

"But that too is withered, like all who ever lived or flourished here!" added Agnes,

dejectedly. "This house appears to me covered with a pall of melancholy! That one ghastly candle burning to the socket, those dingy curtains of no colour that could be named, that portrait of one who loved us all so well, and now the many hopes of our young lives extinguished in darkness! It is a strange fatality!"

"Not a fatality, Agnes, but the wise dispensation of Providence, who never afflicts us in vain," replied Henry. "I often discover yet how necessary for me have been all the sorrows of my own early life, to give me a little reflection, for the cup of affliction, though bitter, is not poisonous. It was the advice of my kindest and best friend once, to put the world behind my back, and go forward with my heart and my hopes all fixed on futurity, while the fewer attractions we have to make us, like Lot's wife, look back, the less we shall be hindered in our progress.

——— Adversity—
Though like a toad ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head,

CHAPTER XIV.

——— The hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—oh! and is all forgot?

SHAKESPEARE.

AFTER Henry left the room, Agnes, having inveighed with more than her usual bitterness against all persons, good or bad, and all events, past, present, or to come, retired to bed, leaving Marion to muse with saddened feelings on the untoward turn which her sister's mind seemed likely to take for the future, which rendered her every day a more uncongenial companion, as now Agnes had come to the final conclusion that she was herself the victim of unmerited and unmitigated misfortune.

About ten o'clock, Marion lighted her candle to retire, and was slowly leaving the room, when she became startled, by suddenly hearing immediately below her window, in the street, a noise of scuffling and shouting, mingled with vehement cries for help, and dreadful oaths, till at length a wild and horrid shriek arose, which thrilled to her very heart. Having hastily summoned Martin, who hurried to the door, she paused some moments in an agony of alarm, and then rushing to the window, threw it open, and gazed out, being so close to the combatants that she could almost have touched them. Two men were engaged apparently in desperate conflict, while Marion's eyes became fixed on them with the fascination of fear. She could not scream, she could not move, she seemed to have lost all power of motion, while watching the whole scene with harrowing interest, yet with the vague indistinctness of a dream. It seemed as if some fearful night-mare were upon her, and as if she were chained to the spot, yet there was a frightful reality in all that followed. It was a fierce and deadly

struggle, carried on with the energetic strength of despair. Again and again, in a hoarse deep voice, the fearful cry arose on the night air, of "Murder," mingled with agonizing cries for help. Marion clung to the window for support, and shivered from head to foot, while still she heard the loud trampling of feet, the fierce tones of defiance, threatening, groans of suppressed anguish, and then a loud delirious shriek of agony, followed by a sharp gasping cry, when one of the combatants fell suddenly to the ground, as if a hundred daggers had pierced him.

Windows were now thrown open on every side, the watchman's rattle became audible, there was a tread of many feet, the sound of many voices, and all seemed to promise speedy aid, when, amidst the death-like silence beside her window, Marion heard a strange unearthly laugh, which sounded more appalling in such a scene than all she had yet beheld. A mysterious dread fell over her heart, her eyes swam, her brain reeled, a faint sickness came upon her, she made a feeble attempt to support herself against the

window, and with a convulsive sigh, sank almost insensible on a seat. When Marion recovered, a low murmuring sound of many voices became audible. Martin hastily opened the door, and a crowd of strange faces appeared, pale and full of horror, while several men almost staggered beneath the weight of a shutter, on which lay a motionless figure, partly concealed by a cloak, with a bloody napkin over the face, while the stillness, the stiff and rigid look of that immoveable form, could indicate nothing but death.

There was that in the voices of those who entered, which caused Marion's nerves to creep with apprehension. A low murmur stole through the crowd, while, shivering with apprehension, she silently gazed on the stone-like, lifeless image before her. The hair was damp and matted with gore, the hands were clenched in agony, the dress soiled with clay and blood, but the tall figure retained a look of solemn dignity, and Marion felt a cold thrill shoot through her heart, while her eyes became riveted on that ghastly object.

Though unable to speak, or to ask a single question, her mind was intensely conscious of all that passed, while many surmises were whispered around respecting the cause and origin of this fearful catastrophe, and much impatience was expressed for the proper authorities to arrive and take cognizance of the circumstances. Marion, at length, feeling herself alone among so great a concourse of strangers, had slowly turned to leave the room, when her ear was caught by hearing the name of De Lancey, and, turning hastily round, she started to find Lord Wigton close beside her, in earnest conference with an officer, who remarked in low ominous accents, "I am perfectly aware that several discussions took place between them lately, respecting the circumstances of his childhood, though I understood them to be of a friendly nature, but this very evening, at Mrs Smytheson's, some very high words passed relating to a young lady."

A faint chill came over Marion as she heard these words, and turning with a be-

wildered look to the speaker, she asked in a low deep voice, if he knew anything of Henry De Lancey.

"Yes! only too much, if all be as we suspect," replied the stranger sternly. "I always liked De Lancey, but if he had any hand in this business, great as the provocation may have been, it would be more like an Italian assassin than a British officer. He was heard once to declare the strongest abhorrence of duelling, but these canting sort of speeches never come to any good. At Mrs Smytheson's, not two hours ago, he seemed very violently irritated against my unfortunate friend who lies murdered there." ——

Marion's countenance became pale and terror-stricken, she looked irresolutely round, and then with faltering steps approached a table on which the corpse had been laid. She could not speak, and her hand trembled convulsively, but she grasped a napkin which shrouded the features of the deceased. Slowly and fearfully she raised it, gave one shrinking glance, and with a broken shriek of astonishment, beheld, stained with blood and rigid

as marble, the well-known countenance of Captain De Crespigny.

Marion's heart stood still, a cold shiver ran through her frame, and, tottering back with a gasp of pallid horror, she sank upon a seat, where her blanched cheek and quivering lip revealed the agony of her amazement and horror. Conscious at once, that this must be the work of Ernest Anstruther, still the world seemed to rock beneath her feet with the vibration of crime and misery, while, covering her face with her hands, she tried to shut out the very thought of all she had beheld.

Martin had sent an express instantly to Lord Doncaster, and meanwhile the dreadful tale flew far and wide, while the universal appetite for horror seemed on this occasion more than satiated. A young, handsome, and talented officer, thus brought down by some mysterious agency to the dust of death! It was appalling, and throughout the whole neighbourhood a spirit of eager, burning, impatient curiosity, became general. Nothing in the annals of murder had ever been more startling! One short hour before, the deceas-

ed had gone forth, from a scene of gay festivity, rich in every earthly possession, full of life, health, and joy, while confidently anticipating years to come, but all was gone like an empty bubble on the stream of time, and in one instant a shroud had been cast over his pale and silent corpse.

A summons at length arrived, for all present to proceed instantly to Kilmarnock Abbey, that depositions might be taken before Lord Doncaster and the nearest magistrates, while Marion as a witness was obliged immediately to appear there, that her testimony might assist with that of others, in clearing up the tragical mystery. The unwarrantable suspicions which had been expressed respecting Henry, formed a strong additional motive to Marion for consenting to accompany the melancholy cavalcade, as she was anxious at once publicly to acquit him, knowing that, as the proverb says, "if a lie has no feet on which to stand, it has always wings with which to fly round the world."

Marion hastened into a carriage which had been sent, that she might follow the body to

Kilmarnock Abbey, where she was ushered before long within the house. It was a solemn scene! That large old hall hung with antique armour, spears, horns, cross-bows, and portraits of many a long-forgotten ancestor. The gothic stained window, magnificent in its proportions, the ancient groined roof, the black oaken panels, the cumbrous carved wood-work, the marble floor, and the faded tapestry, all dimly illuminated by the glimmering of a single lamp hastily lighted for the occasion. An uncertain mysterious gleam was cast on the nearest objects, while the more distant recesses were thrown into gloomy shadow, and the tumultuous agitation of those around contrasted strangely with the locked and riveted limbs of that motionless figure to which all eyes were directed, the rigid stillness and stern composure of that countenance now invested with all the majesty of death, from which Marion turned with shuddering sympathy and amazement, while the multitude of servants and spectators continued in a state of wild excitement, uttering on every side subdued exclamations of horror.

At length Lord Doncaster himself slowly entered, with several gentlemen, some of whom looked deeply concerned, while others were evidently no more affected than if they had come to see the fifth act of a well-performed tragedy. Among the first to appear was Henry De Lancey, to whom Marion had instantly sent an express, and, totally unconscious of exciting more than ordinary notice, he advanced to Lord Doncaster with an expression of heart-felt sorrow, wishing to volunteer his services in unravelling the appalling and mysterious events of the night. While some eyes were turned on Henry with eager and intense scrutiny, an anxious investigation was commenced, though without success, for no clue could be obtained which threw any light upon this treacherous and unaccountable murder.

Not a whisper was heard, while Henry at once related all which had passed that night between himself and Captain De Crespigny, during the angry dialogue which had been overheard between them; but as delicacy to Agnes prevented him from being perfectly explicit re-

specting the cause of their dissension, several questions were asked, which he felt obliged to decline answering, though a cloud of suspicion gradually gathered over the countenances of several spectators, when he acknowledged having been in company with the deceased a very few minutes before the catastrophe, and that they had separated in anger.

All that could be ascertained for certain was, that Captain De Crespigny had passed the evening at Mrs Smytheson's,—that he seemed in unusual spirits, which is always remembered to have been the case with those who suffer some sudden calamity,—that he had spoken of plans involving many years of life and health,—that he had mentioned to Lord Wigton differences having arisen lately between him and Henry De Lancey,—and that some one had been observed lurking near the door, when he took leave at night of his cousin, Miss Howard, to whom he said in his usual tone of characteristic gallantry, "I shall count the minutes till we meet to-morrow!"

Little did he then, in the bright glow of

youth, health, and spirits, foresee what that to-morrow should produce!

No farther information could be elicited except the evidence of Marion, who described, in faltering accents, the deadly conflict she had witnessed; but, being unable to see the assassin, she could afford no assistance in identifying him; though she declared in the strongest terms, that in height and form he bore no resemblance to any one she had ever seen before, unless it were the madman Ernest Anstruther. To have explicitly denied that it was Henry, would have seemed like a tacit acknowledgment that such a thing might have been conjectured; and Marion abhorred the very thought of his name being at all implicated in a catastrophe so revolting.

Some time elapsed before it occurred to the imagination of Henry, that the eye of suspicion could for a moment rest upon him; and when the idea flashed into his mind, it seemed so perfectly preposterous, as to be scarcely worth a thought; but he now perceived with indignant astonishment, that there were those among the spectators who cast on him dark

glances of doubt and suspicion; therefore feeling that to be accused, even in momentary thought, of a deed from which his very soul would have shrunk, was intolerable, he advanced without a moment's hesitation towards the table before which Lord Doncaster was seated; and, placing his hand upon that of the corpse beside him, he spoke in a firm and decided tone, though evidently with deep emotion, while the spectators crushed forward to hear him, and the dead silence around gave a solemn distinctness to his words, uttered, as they were, in a low, impressive tone.

"I perceive,—with what degree of astonishment no words can describe,—that I—the last man on earth who would seek the life of another, even in open and honourable conflict,—that I, who had for my benefactor and instructor the most upright and excellent of men,—am now, by a strange combination of circumstances, likely to become suspected of a dastardly and treacherous assassination! I disdain to make any paltry asseverations of innocence! yet, let me not blame any man for what he thinks! This is a time of sudden

and mysterious alarm! The calamitous event is as little to be accounted for, as it is deeply to be deplored! Already I have buried in oblivion every cause of irritation which had recently arisen between us. Nothing personal to myself had caused our alienation. The deceased acted on many occasions towards me formerly with the kindest consideration, which I am as ready now to remember, as I am also to forget all that ever was painful or unsatisfactory between us."

Henry bent his head to Lord Doncaster with an air of resolute but melancholy composure, and stood back while several other persons gave their evidence, and Marion observed with surprise, that, instead of being occupied in attending to their depositions, young De Lancey gazed with a look of wondering perplexity all around the large old-fashioned hall, while, with an expression of absent astonishment, his eye wandered over the gigantic chimney-piece of quaint device, the rusty armour and trophies of the chase, the old historical furniture, the tapestried chairs, the statues, and the richly sculptured

ceiling. At length he glanced towards Lord Doncaster, who had been for some time keenly observing him, but whose looks were now hastily averted, while apparently occupied in arranging some papers, and it was evident that the aged peer's hand shook with agitation. Much might, of course, be attributed to the fearful event of the night, and yet Marion felt that this emotion did not originate from the same cause, for the Marquis cast frequently a furtive glance at Henry, though avoiding observation, and his excitement obviously increased.

Young De Lancey seemed evidently struggling with some painful agitating perplexity! Again he perused the room with a scrutinizing gaze, and again his eye became fastened on the aged features of Lord Doncaster with a steady earnest examination; while still the expression of doubt and wonder on his countenance became more obvious, as if he were attempting to stir up some recollections which would not come at his bidding. Turning at length to Marion, he whispered in a low, almost dreaming tone, "It is long,—very

long since I have been here! When did I see this apartment last?"

"You, Henry! never! My uncle ceased to visit Lord Doncaster ages ago! Indeed, they rather disliked each other than otherwise! We never were in this old hall before!"

"And yet, Marion," replied Henry, in a tone of increasing decision, while his eye still wandered round with a look of intense curiosity, "I could swear that every object in this room is familiar to my memory. That oak roof blackened with age; those time-stained walls; those strange old portraits and their massy frames! I seem to look back through a dark mist, and to remember scenes and circumstances which occurred in this apartment long ages ago!"

"Yes, Henry! every person living is subject to these unaccountable delusions! It has often been mentioned as extraordinary, that, when any very agitating scenes occur, people are apt to feel that sort of dreaming fancy you describe, as if the whole had been acted over in their sight before."

"No, Marion, it is not so! The whole is a distinct reality! A hundred recollections arise like phantoms, and struggle in my memory. Yes! I have stood upon this floor in former years! I have gazed upon every object you see there! This was once my home! There, in that large old chair, I have sat on my mother's knee, and the aged countenance of Lord Doncaster himself is indelibly imprinted on my recollection."

"Impossible!"

"True, Marion! most true! A thousand remembrances pour in like a flood upon me! This room has often appeared before my eyes in a dream! it is connected with my earliest years! Look at the farthest corner of this hall,—behind that damask curtain stands a secret door, and it leads to a room where I could swear that some hours of my life were formerly passed, when or why I cannot even guess. Marion, the house is crowded at present, and we shall not be remarked, let us verify my recollection, by gradually approaching the concealed door, and then you will be convinced that memory has not deceived me."

When Henry, by a slow and difficult progress, had piloted Marion through the dense mass of persons who filled the hall, they reached at length the spot he had indicated, where, lifting the tapestry, he at once opened a door, so nearly resembling the panelling as scarcely to be discernible, and they entered a small low room, which seemed to Marion no larger than a four-post bed, so dusty, dark, and neglected-looking, that it had evidently not been occupied for years. Long cobwebs hung like banners from the roof,—it was almost destitute of furniture—and they found a picture placed on the floor, its face towards the wall, representing a lady, young and dazzlingly beautiful, and a boy beside her, playing with a large Newfoundland dog.

Henry silently strode across the room, and, as if perfectly familiar with its arrangements, he threw open a small cupboard, into which had been thrown the broken fragments of several childish playthings. He paused and gave an agitated look towards Marion. His countenance had become pale, and wore the same expression as at first, of almost agoniz-

ing perplexity, while he was evidently groping through the darkest recesses of his memory for that which still eluded his grasp. Leaning his head on his hand, with eyes fixed on the portrait before him, Henry remained long in this agitating reverie, his countenance flushed by the inward tumult, while hunting through his recollection for a more defined shadow of that which flickered in his brain, and Marion silently observed him. She did not speak, she scarcely even breathed, for now it seemed to her as if some mystery were there too deep for her to fathom, connected probably with Henry's early history, and a secret hope glimmered on her mind that possibly the time had come at last when a clue might be obtained to the mystery of Henry's birth and misfortunes.

The child, whose portrait they had here discovered, bore an obvious resemblance to Henry De Lancey, as she first remembered him. The very dress was similar, and all around brought to mind what Henry had once described of his early home. It seemed to Marion as if this were the very crisis of his

existence, and she waited in silent hope, expecting that the moment might come, when he would again speak to tell her his thoughts; but a deep oppression seemed gathering over his spirit, he riveted his hands over his face, as if anxious thus to shut out the world, and every thing in it, from his shrinking memory, and there was a silence around like death itself.

CHAPTER XV.

"Ah! Sir! had I but bestowed half the pains in learning a trade, that I have in learning to be a scoundrel, I might have been a rich man at this day."

VICAR OF WAKEFIELD.

WHILE Henry continued thus entranced with perplexity, Marion's attention was gradually attracted by a noise at her side, and, looking suddenly round, she was startled to behold crouching in the remotest corner of the room, the figure of a human being, which filled her with horror and dismay, so haggard, so emaciated, so unlike anything she had ever looked upon before, that scarcely could she suppress a shriek of dismay. It was a face of woe and wretchedness, once seen never to be forgotten, and she had formerly seen it. The sunken

temples, the hollow eyes, the lurid glare of insanity in the eye, and the clusters of hair, black as death, blown by the night-wind in large damp masses on his forehead, all brought the wretched Howard instantaneously to her mind; and, grasping Henry's arm with an exclamation of terror, she attempted to hurry with him out of the room. Scarcely, however, had she made a step towards the door, when the madman darted forward, and closed it, then wheeling round, he said, in a low husky voice, while his strength seemed so subdued, that the grasp of an infant might have mastered him,

"You have discovered me, and there is no escape! Be it so! 'Welcome death,' as the rat said, when the trap fell down. Here the tragedy began, and here let it end!"

He paused for several minutes, and gradually his face assumed a look of ungovernable anguish, while he added, in a dreary, desolate tone, unlike any human voice,

"I could weep for my own ruin,—for my sister's,—but the time is past. Never shall I shed another tear! Our sin be on the Abbé

Mordaunt's head! The withering curse of a dying man be on his head! The misery of eternal ruin be on his head, as it is on mine! For his own purposes he nurtured every wild passion in our young blood. He taught me the mad ambition that was my ruin,—promised me impunity here and hereafter, if I assisted in his schemes; and now, after being his tool, I am, like a useless tool, cast aside! But could he silence my outraged conscience? No! The gibbet is for ever hovering before my sight, and the curse of heaven is borne to my soul in every blast!"

"Yet you are still in this world of hope, where none can be finally condemned," said Henry, solemnly. "Till the grave closes over your head, mercy and pardon may yet be asked, and may yet be granted! Ernest Anstruther, from the hour of my mother's death until now, you have most barbarously injured me, but mortal man must not keep up immortal anger. I only obey our beneficent Creator in saying, that if you repent, I heartily forgive you. Your life is probably forfeited to the

outraged laws of man, but may your soul find mercy in its utmost need."

"I have been your deadliest foe, De Lancey, and haunted your steps with my hatred from childhood; but it is done," continued Anstruther, with a look of bleak and barren agony. "I will not live to be caged in prison, a spectacle of scorn and infamy, to die a death of shame. How different from what I once hoped! There shall be no to-morrow for me now in this world! A fire is at my heart, which can only be quenched by death! It is better not to be, than to be miserable! I shall give my body to the beasts of the field, or the birds in the air. I shall find a bed where no dreams shall haunt me, and a sleep from which there is no awakening! A wolf may lose his teeth, but you cannot change his nature! As a madman I have lived, and as a madman I shall die! We must sleep in the bed we prepare for ourselves! Before that sun has travelled another hour, you, Henry De Lancey, shall be raised to honour, and I shall have died, covered with infamy and disgrace. I never

stir now, without the fatal means of release!"

Marion shivered from head to foot, at the ghastly sound of Anstruther's voice, but paralyzed with terror, she dared not stir, for already a loaded pistol was in his hand. A fearful ghastly smile distorted his countenance,—the smile of a maniac,—a smile such as may be seen on the lips of a corpse, and an expression gleamed in his eye, which it curdled her blood to look upon, and might have struck terror into the strongest mind; but Henry, in a calm, deliberate voice, replied,

"There is no such dreamless sleep, Anstruther, as you describe! Even Satan himself believes in futurity! Whatever be your sorrow, and worse than sorrow, your sin, do not madly hasten to that world where there is no peace and no pardon. Take pity upon yourself."

"Mine has been a desperate life, and it shall have a desperate end," replied Ernest, with a sullen deadly smile on his bloodless lips; but trying to assume a tone of reckless indifference, he added, "I never was one to

choke upon the tail! I have gazed at the moon, and fallen in the gutter, but, De Lancey, for the sake of that good old man Sir Arthur, who was your benefactor and mine, I will not die without doing you justice. The wax of secrecy may now be broken, and here are papers clearly and indisputably to prove that you are the legitimate son of Lord Doncaster. They purify your mother's character from every aspersion, and testify without doubt your title to be Lord Dunraven."

Had an apparition arisen through the floor, or had a cannon gone off at Henry's ear, he could scarcely have been more startled and astonished, while, with an exclamation of joy and rapture, Marion rushed up to him, saying, in accents of tremulous joy, while he stood bewildered with surprise, and then grasping the packet in his hand, staggered to a seat, "It is then as uncle Arthur once almost believed! Oh, Henry, what joy! If he had but lived to hear it! Can this be possible!"

After a few moments given to emotion and

wonder, while Henry seemed almost as if his spirit had taken wing from the body, Marion having in some degree recovered herself, looked round, and observed with surprise that they were alone! The madman, taking advantage of Henry's agitation, had rushed wildly from the house, to be seen and heard of no more. Henry rose, intending instantly to give an alarm, and to follow in pursuit of Anstruther; but scarcely had he stirred a step, before he and Marion were startled by hearing, in the adjoining room, a shriek so shrill and appalling, so heart-broken and delirious, that in an agony of alarm, they hurried forward to the hall. A confused murmur, a buzz of suppressed astonishment, had arisen among the assembled crowd, in which were many countenances expressing strong fear, others wearing only an air of gaping curiosity, many with their hands clasped in amazement, and others expanding them in terror, but all listening with looks of motionless attention, while every eye was turned towards the table on which the murdered body had been laid, and a deep silence ensued, of hushed expecta-

tion, as if the stage were about to exhibit a tragedy of exciting interest.

Henry glanced rapidly around, and saw standing beside the corpse a tall female, whose aspect filled all present with surprise. Her worn and haggard countenance seemed cold and rigid as the figure on a tomb-stone, and her cheek had become overspread with a damp and leaden paleness; while in speechless horror, which seemed as if it amounted almost to insanity, she pointed her long ghastly finger towards the body. A hundred eyes were now bent on hers, and her bewildered glance swept for a moment round the assembled crowd, with a look of unutterable wretchedness, till at length her eye fell on Lord Doncaster. On him she now fixed an unshrinking gaze, while she spoke in a low hoarse whisper, which sounded with terrifying distinctness through the large old hall, and fell upon every ear with a solemnity and awfulness like the knell of death.

"I knew all, but could not hinder it! No! I would have died to prevent this! There was death in my brother's eye when he left me!

I pursued him, but it was too late! Day by day, step by step, we have sunk into deeper crime and misery! Who would think that I have ever been young, innocent, and happy? The barrier was first thrown down by him who lies here! Hour by hour the deepening shadows grew darker! Long, long have these eyes been drenched with the tears of a broken heart! My wretched brother swore that every pang I suffered should be avenged! I would have pardoned, I would have forgotten all, if I might but have saved my brother, and sheltered *him* from death. I have warned, I have wept, implored! I have prayed on my very knees; but in vain! All is now over! Every law of God and man has been violated! None in all this assembly can see as I do the horror of our guilt—none can hate it more! The past maddens me, and the future—oh! what is there in the future for me!"

With a shuddering groan, Mary Anstruther sunk back on a chair, and she trembled like a leaf in the blast of autumn, while a mortal silence ensued. Lord Doncaster, with brows knit and lips firmly compressed, seemed reso-

lute to conceal the emotions evidently struggling and boiling within his breast; and the bye-standers, in dismay, had all shrunk back from the unhappy woman; but Henry now, with an irresistible impulse of pity, approached, and spoke a few soothing words to her, when she suddenly looked up, and seeing the expression of unfeigned commiseration with which he gazed at her, burning tears forced themselves into her eyes, and, with a look of piercing woe, she added in a low husky choking voice,

"I have asked pity, and all are not pitiless! I am used to misery—that cannot draw tears from me now, but kindness does,—your kindness especially. My heart was dumb and frozen! I never thought to weep again. Many is the long day since I have been pitied! Many is the long day since I have deserved it! Yes!" added she, grasping Henry's arm with almost iron force, while she spoke in a voice so strange and deep, it thrilled to every heart. "The time is come for me to tell all and die. The secret of your life was begun with bloodshed, and here in bloodshed it has ended. The thought that

your mother died by my brother's hand has, from that fatal hour, gnawed like a fiery serpent at my heart. My soul is shaken to the very dust; but while I have breath to speak, let me confess how we slandered your mother—how we caused her to be driven as an outcast from this house—how we deceived your father, and cheated you, Henry De Lancey, of your birthright."

At this moment Lord Doncaster, who had seemed almost paralyzed with agitation, and as if the springs of life were drying up within him, suddenly rose, and waving back the Abbé Mordaunt and others who were crowding around him, he placed himself opposite to the wretched woman, and fixed a look of searching examination on her death-struck countenance, while he seemed afraid to trust his own voice, lest it should betray the tumult of his feelings; but after a momentary struggle, he passed his hand across his eyes, and said in a low tone of doubt and uncertainty,

"It seems like a resurrection from the dead! It cannot be! Is Mary Anstruther yet in being?"

"I have dreamed of such a name once," replied she, casting a desolate look around. "My heart was not then bursting, as it is now, because none can help me."

Henry's eye became fastened with a look of settled intensity on the countenance of Lord Doncaster, who walked a few agitated steps about the room, and then added, in a voice of stern astonishment,

"You spoke of a deception! Let me know all? What of Laura Mordaunt?"

"Not of Laura Mordaunt, my Lord, but your lawful wife! The story of her previous marriage, invented by the Abbé, was a hideous lie. Had she been told the reason why you spurned her from the house, she could have disproved it. We told her only that your affections had been changed. She was too proud to complain; yet she did at last write a letter, which never reached you. She there made a solemn appeal to your justice and compassion, claiming for her son the affection and the station to which he is entitled. She became persuaded, by the Abbé's contrivance, that her marriage had been ille-

gal. All—all was foul and horrid falsehood. We each had our various interests to serve! the Abbé to embezzle his neice's fortune—Ernest to keep his place near the succession—and I ——"

Mary Anstruther's almost unearthly voice, which sounded unlike the voice of a living being, now entirely failed, her teeth chattered, she shivered from head to foot, and her eyes became fixed on the stiffened corpse by her side, while Lord Doncaster, with a scarcely audible groan of bitter regret, locked his hands over his heart as if to still its palpitations, and listened, in agitated silence, for more. At length the wretched woman continued, while her voice became faint, and her very blood seemed to freeze at the sound of her own words,

"The slow progress of a breaking heart was not rapid enough for Ernest's hatred. He believed she was the cause of our ruin, and he murdered her! I would die a thousand deaths now to restore Laura Mordaunt,—to undo all that I have done! Oh! that memory itself would fail! I am haunted and tortured by

those ever-living remembrances! They will pursue me in the very grave! An eternal volcano is in my heart! As the moth flutters round the lamp, so does my soul hover over the fires of eternity! The book of life is done, —the story is closed,—the blackness of despair is within me, and my spirit shall at last fall shrieking into everlasting perdition!"

Lord Doncaster looked as if a flash of lightening had blinded him, while, after gazing for a moment in almost vacant astonishment at Mary Anstruther, he put his hand to his head, and with a suppressed groan, leaned against the table for support. A feather might have thrown him down, but he was evidently trying to collect his senses, and murmured hurriedly to himself in broken accents, "No! no! Impossible! It is all proved! She was guilty! Who can doubt it?"

"My Lord! it was a cruel, horrid, slanderous falsehood!" cried Mary, in a tone of solemn earnestness. "Night and the grave seem already closed over my wretched head. Take then, the assurance of a dying creature, that Laura Mordaunt was innocent. Let me do one

good action on the earth, before I perish for ever! She deserved a better fate! Let her young son enjoy the titles and honours of his ancestors. Letters will be produced after my death, proving his right. I desire all here to witness the last words I shall speak before my lips are sealed by death in everlasting silence, that there stands Henry, Lord Dunraven, the lawful son of Lord Doncaster! And now my destiny is accomplished! Already I seem separated from the living, though not yet united to the dead! Let my end come quickly, as it comes surely."

Henry's very heart trembled with agitation, and it seemed as if his veins ran lightning, while he fixed a long and agitated look on Lord Doncaster, whose countenance became convulsed with agitation, his brain seemed contracted by a spasm, the thread of life appeared suddenly to snap, a thick mist obscured his sight, and, before his newly found son could rush forward to his support, he had fallen to the ground as if shot.

The room was immediately cleared of strangers, and the Abbé Mordaunt fled with-

out delay to the continent, where he soon after buried himself in the monastery of La Trappe.

During several succeeding days, all that mortal man could do was done to restore Lord Doncaster, while Henry watched over his recently-discovered parent with incessant attention, and hoped, but hoped in vain, that Lord Doncaster might live to recognise and bless him; but the varied and vehement emotions of the last few hours had been too much for his aged frame. He continued during some time insensible, and, at length, after a short but severe struggle, expired.

Henry was acknowledged, however, before long, and recognised by the world, as not a doubt could remain on any mind of his identity and of his claims, after those papers had been read bequeathed to him by the Anstruthers, and before the wretched Mary had quitted the earthly scene of her misfortunes and crimes, she was consoled by the forgiveness and the prayers of young De Lancey, now Marquis of Doncaster.

The whole unfathomable abyss of Henry's feelings and affections was now irradiated with

hope, and he felt himself almost overwhelmed by the torrent of happiness about to pour upon him, when, hiding his face with his hands, tears of indescribable,—of almost insufferable joy gushed from his eyes. The change seemed sudden as spring, bursting forth amidst the arid deserts of Siberia, after the snow has been melted away in a night, and the barren ground is, as by magic, clothed with blossoms, and warmed with sunshine. It appeared as if a word might yet break the charm,—as if he might awaken and find the whole a dream of enchantment, but the crowning of all his earthly joy, was, when he at length claimed, in the open face of day, that true, constant, and disinterested affection of Caroline Smythe, which had so long been to him like a spring of water in the desert to a lonely traveller, cheering and refreshing his heart in the long pilgrimage of life.

> Oh, doubly sweet is sunshine after rain,
> Rest after toil, port after stormy seas.

The language of happy love, interesting above all else to the parties themselves, is uninter-

esting to others, but who ever had a brighter lot than Caroline and Henry, while they looked far into the future, anticipating together a long life of mutual confidence cheered by "the soul's calm sunshine, and the heart's best joy."

"I begin now to fancy nobody in the world happy but myself!" exclaimed Henry, gayly. "I am almost ashamed to be so much better off than I deserve! but, as Lady Townly says, Caroline, 'We must squeeze as little as possible of the lemon into our matrimonial sherbet!'"

"Must I actually give up the delightful romance of loving you as a friendless adventurer, Henry? What would Lydia Languish have said to such a dull, every-day, commonplace reality? I do not absolutely hate you," said Caroline, with a conscious laugh, and a slight relapse into her usual capricious vivacity, "but we must have one little quarrel yet!—there is a circumstance respecting me, which has hitherto, for very good reasons, been kept secret, and now it must most unfortunately come out!"——

"What can that be?" asked Henry, smilingly watching the variations of Caroline's countenance. "I am quite as ready for a quarrel as you are, therefore tell me the worst at once!"

"It is an objection against me, that I heard you once say would in any case be insuperable!" added Caroline, archly. "When all is told, you will certainly change your mind!"

"Then I shall be very much changed indeed! What magical spell do you intend to use?"

"Henry! you made a rash vow once, in my hearing, never to marry an heiress," said Caroline, trying to speak in a tone of gravity, and looking away. "Would you not abhor and avoid the heiress of Howard Abbey, including all the broad acres of Beaujolie manor?"

Henry looked at Caroline in silent perplexity, but the blush, the frolicsome laugh, and the air of arch caprice with which she spoke, all at once enlightened his mind, and, seizing her hand with most lover-like *empressement*, he gayly exclaimed, "Well, Caroline!

since it must be so, I forgive you for being an heiress, but in no one whom I liked less could I have endured this! I love you in spite of it! I do indeed! You merited already more than I ever can offer; but, Caroline, we love each other truly, and, for better, as well as for worse, I shall love you for ever."

"Then remember this promise!" exclaimed Caroline, playfully. "I am so apprehensive of having a husband who might become indifferent to me, that I shall have no objection to hold my life on the same uncertain tenure as that entertaining Sultana in the Arabian Nights, who was to be massacred as soon as her husband wearied of her!"

"You might safely trust me!" replied Henry, laughing. "But some ladies would scarcely survive the thousand and one days. I intend some time to propose in parliament a retiring pension for all the married people who wish to be separated."

"In modern times that would be rather expensive! Long ago, when ladies married, they nailed their colours to the mast resolving, for better for worse, to die at their post.

But now, on the slightest provocation, husbands or wives leave their P.P.C. cards with each other, and are off. Some of the marriage settlements lately, are founded on so much distrust, that they resemble more a deed of separation, than a contract uniting the interests of two into one."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Le commencement de la fin!"
TALLEYRAND.

EVENTS come always in clusters; and the very same day on which Henry was publicly recognised as Marquis of Doncaster, Marion received a letter from Sir Patrick, announcing his intention immediately to return home. He alluded, with a degree of feeling which surprised and deeply affected her, to the death of Sir Arthur, and spoke of happy days yet to come, when he hoped she might at length be united to "the man whom, above all others on earth, he esteemed the most, and liked the best." In reading these words, Marion felt a pang of melancholy sympathy

for her brother, believing that of course they alluded to his friend Captain De Crespigny; and deeply did she deplore the grief he was about to suffer, when first he should hear of that appalling event which had filled every heart with grief and consternation.

It was on a gloomy evening in the month of February, when the sun, having all day failed to disperse a thick fog, had sunk into darkness, that Marion, expecting her brother's return, used all the little ingenuity of affection to render his reception cheerful. The fire blazed brightly; the tea urn was on the table, and she herself had taken more than usual pains with her dress, besides having decked her face with unwonted smiles for the occasion.

When Sir Patrick at last arrived, there was a tone of unusual kindness in his manner to both Agnes and Marion, who were surprised by the genuine warmth with which he expressed his happiness on seeing them again, and at the subdued melancholy in his voice. The fatal news of Captain De Crespigny's death had reached him on the road, and there

appeared a profound solemnity in his manner when he alluded to it, more affecting than the loudest expressions of grief; but it was a subject on which he seemed incapable of speaking, while Marion scarcely thought a human countenance could have expressed so much anguish. While Agnes preserved an almost statue-like silence, Marion took her brother's hand in her own, and endeavoured, by every affectionate endearment, to testify her sympathy, till at length he clasped her in his arms, saying in accents almost choked with agitation, "Your sisterly kindness, Marion, has survived all my neglect and misconduct. Let me thank you for that; but could it survive if I were to tell you of a cruel and heartless treachery?"

"It can survive any thing—every thing," whispered Marion, earnestly. "Say nothing that distresses you, Patrick! Never think of it again!"

"I must not only think of it for ever, Marion, but show my regret by telling you all," replied he, in a tone of deep concentrated feeling. "But not now, Marion; not yet!

I could not bear to do so in the full tide of our happiness at meeting. You deserve to be loved as you are loved by one who is every way worthy of you."

The colour rushed over Marion's countenance, and vanished as rapidly again; but her eyes, which had been fixed on those of Sir Patrick with sparkling affection, now fell sadly to the ground, while she made no reply, evidently trying to avoid her brother's notice, who seemed bent on reading her thoughts.

"Marion," said he gravely, "to what do you attribute Richard Granville's strange and unjustifiable silence?"

"It is strange, Patrick; but I could pledge my life it is not unjustifiable," replied Marion in tremulous accents. "When I gave him my heart, it was with a perfect conviction that he is incapable of deceit or dishonour, and I believe him so still. I trust him as I would be trusted myself. In this world or in another we shall understand each other again."

Marion's features kindled as she spoke; bright and beautiful tears gathered in her eyes; her manner became more energetic;

her whole heart seemed on her lips, and the deep melody of her voice was eloquence itself, as she advocated the cause of her absent lover.

"But surely, Marion," said Agnes, turning round, as she was about to leave the room, "there are pen, ink, and paper to be found on the Continent, if he pleased to use them."

"Yes," added Sir Patrick; "and if Granville ever returns, Marion, you will of course receive him coldly, give yourself all the airs of injured merit, and in short, treat him from the very first as a flagrant criminal."

"Not at all, Patrick!" replied Marion, surprised at the lurking smile she traced on her brother's countenance. "I place no dependance on my own attractions, or I might indeed despair; but my reliance rests on the consistency and generosity of Richard himself, in which I cannot be mistaken. The features of his character, like the features of his countenance, are unalterable; and I could not believe in his identity, if he were deficient in honour and truth. Even at the worst, Patrick," added Marion, while her glittering wet eye-lashes drooped on her glowing cheek,

"where we love it is a pleasure to forgive; but my confidence as yet is unshaken."

"Then, Marion, you deserve to be happy,—happier than I ever was, or ever shall be; and never, believe me, had any one a brighter lot in prospect. Those tears have no business there! They will soon, I hope, be strangers to your eyes!"

There was a look of joyous emotion in the countenance of Sir Patrick as he spoke, which made the heart of Marion leap to her very lips with agitation, while in broken and hurried accents he continued,

"I did intend to give you a long and painful explanation of my conduct—to tell you of my recent dangerous illness abroad, during which I was attended by the most inestimable of friends; to describe how the slow progress of my recovery left me leisure for the counsels and conversation of the best of men; to say how the death of De Crespigny has overawed and afflicted me, taking the gloss from my whole future existence on earth; and to tell you that the loss of Clara Granville, and the last scene we had together, have

put a climax to the entire change of all my thoughts and feelings in life. I am returned, Marion, now, to do justice wherever it is due; by years of careful restriction to discharge the uttermost farthing of my debts, and to make two persons happy who deserve it."

A bright quick flush passed across Marion's cheek, and a bewildering hope darted into her mind, when Sir Patrick, smilingly, added, with a thrilling tremor still in his voice,

"A stranger is waiting for me below, who can explain all better than myself. May he come up? I am too much agitated to be distinct!"

Scarcely had her brother left the room, before Marion heard a light springing step on the stairs. The door was flung open; and if joy ever killed, it would have been now, when Marion, with almost incredulous astonishment, again beheld Richard Granville; his features lighted up by the smile of former days; his eyes radiant with joy, and his countenance almost convulsed with agitation, while, giving an exclamation of rapturous delight, he presented himself before her.

If Marion's life had depended on her speaking a word, she could not for some moments have uttered it; but there is a silent eloquence in deep emotion, more powerful than language; and, giddy with excessive astonishment, tears and smiles seemed to struggle for the mastery in her countenance, like the summer light and shade upon an aspen tree.

All was mutual confidence, and mutual affection now, while Richard Granville rapidly, and almost incoherently, conveyed to Marion's heart the surpassing felicity of his own, telling her how the long hours of his absence had each and all of them been counted over with unimaginable impatience; that she had never been a moment absent from his thoughts, and that, having seized the first instant to hasten to his happiness, he had now returned to claim his promised bride, and in the sight of heaven and earth, to dedicate to her all his earthly affections—to make her his own for ever.

With a deep sob of gratified emotion, Marion listened; her feelings were strained to the uttermost; but she frankly received all

his joyful protestations of unchanged and unchangeable attachment, and attempted not to conceal her own, saying, in low tremulous accents, as soon as she could command her voice to speak,

"I think the more of myself for being loved by you. It will take a life-time to testify how deeply I value your affection."

"My happiness would be nothing if it could be expressed in words," continued Richard, in accents of the deepest tenderness. "But let future years, my Marion, speak for me. It is said that no man would willingly consent to live his life exactly over again; but we shall be so happy in each other, that nothing would make us hesitate except the hope of a still better life to come."

"And now," said Sir Patrick, entering, with some degree of his old vivacity restored, "your sails are full set with a brisk breeze for the haven of happiness! May you both obtain everything you have been disappointed of in former years, and find nothing left to wish for in future."

"That would be misery, rather than hap-

piness,' replied Mr Granville, smiling. "No, Dunbar, for myself, and for Marion, my still dearer self, I trust that we shall contentedly see the stream of events flow on in sunshine or shadow, without a wish to change them. We shall be one on earth, one in heaven, and one throughout eternity, confiding in each other with entire and unalterable affection; while every action of our lives, and every thought of our hearts, shall be consecrated by implicit submission to that Beneficent Being who has bestowed on us so much."

Our mutual bond of faith and truth
No time can disengage,
Those blessings of our early youth
Shall cheer our latest age.

Those ills that wait on all below,
Shall ne'er be felt by me;
Or gently felt, and only so,
As being shar'd with thee.

COWPER.

THE END.

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